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THE CHRISTIAN
MINISTER:
HIS AIMS AND
METHODS & BY
JAMES ROBERTSON
& D:D

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THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER
HIS AIMS AND METHODS

**THE
CHRISTIAN MINISTER
HIS AIMS AND METHODS**

**LECTURES ON PASTORAL THEOLOGY
AT THE FOUR SCOTTISH UNIVERSITIES
SESSIONS 1897-98 AND 1898-99 : BY**

JAMES ROBERTSON, D.D.

**AUTHOR OF 'OUR LORD'S TEACHING' AND
'LADY BLANCHE BALFOUR, A REMINISCENCE'**



**PUBLISHED BY
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PREFACE

THE General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, having in view that there are no Chairs of Pastoral Theology in the Scottish Universities, has in recent years provided that short courses of lectures should be given on the subject by two ministers named for the duty, who are appointed for a term of two years. The addresses that follow were given to divinity students in accordance with this arrangement during Sessions 1897-98 and 1898-99. Their publication is due mainly to the enterprise of the publishers. I could not, however, have ventured to agree to the proposal made me but for the encouraging reception given to the lectures by those who heard them. To the students, accordingly, this book is, in the first instance, gratefully and hopefully dedicated. I trust that it describes, however imperfectly, a true

ministry. May it contribute something to ministries which shall be both true and fruitful in the coming generation !

The Rev. Dr. Forrest of West Coates Church, Edinburgh, and my brother, the Rev. D. R. Robertson, of Clepington, Dundee, have kindly looked over the proofs, and made suggestions.

JAMES ROBERTSON.

WHITTINGHAME, *March* 1899.

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LECTURE I

THE AIM OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER AND THE MEANS HE WILL USE

IN beginning this short course of lectures, I hesitate to call them 'Lectures on Pastoral Theology.' That seems to me a too formal and academic title for what I have in my mind. I look on this course of addresses rather as an opportunity, given to a minister of age and experience in the profession to which you look forward, of laying out before you some of those fruits of his experience on which he sets most certain value—some of the conclusions to which he has been brought by God's dealings with himself and by the successes or the failures he has known in his own ministry—some lessons of his life which he can read better now in retrospect than he was able to do at the time: for, as you know, the meaning of our life and of our divinely sent experiences stands out more legible and clear after lapse of years. Instead, therefore, of a formal and exhaustive treatise on a branch of theological science, the addresses I aim at giving—

which, I believe, it is intended by the Church your lecturers should give—will be of an informal kind, and will consist of such words of counsel and hope as come most naturally and readily from my own mind and from the memory of over thirty years of life which I have spent as a parish minister.

Another limitation I have to make. If I am to speak from experience, I shall speak as a country minister. My *close* experience of our work has been entirely in that character, and I am glad to have assigned to me this share of the field of these lectureships, and to know that my eminent colleague, Mr. Wallace Williamson, is specially qualified to speak as a town minister. I am unwilling, of course, to think that my point of view is an altogether inferior one: but if it be so in any degree, you will recollect this fact which redeems it from anything like insignificance, that the country population, throughout Scotland generally, belongs in large proportion to our Church, and looks to us for spiritual ministration to a degree that lays upon us great responsibility. While I speak, however, from the point of view of the country minister, and most of you will probably spend a great part of your lives in such a sphere, I am encouraged also by knowing that the office and work of our calling have in their main features everywhere far more resemblance than difference.

The subject I would begin with in our con-

ference (as I may call it) to-day is *The aim of the Christian Minister*—of the man who is ordained to the charge of a congregation and parish.

I believe it to be of importance to consider this afresh and from the beginning; to make sure, by appeal to what is highest in our knowledge, that we have the right aim, and that we have it distinctly before us. It too frequently happens, I believe, that a man enters on a charge without sufficiently considering this, or considering it afresh for himself. Then he becomes very largely the servant of custom—the slave of tradition. In preparing to preach, for example, his mind is dominated by the idea of making what is called ‘a good sermon,’ but his standard for this varies according to his history or even his locality, and is perhaps a quite mistaken one. His standard of a good sermon may be a literary standard. The test he applies as he writes may be, How would this sermon read in print? Would it be fit for a place in a published volume? Or his test which he is unconsciously applying may be, Will it please the congregation? Or, Will it satisfy the one or two educated people in the congregation? Or, even if he stands on a higher level of purpose than this, he may be thinking, Will this be a profitable sermon? Is it likely to do good? while yet he has no very definite idea what good he means to accomplish.

And further, unless a minister has a true and

definite aim which he has chosen as the aim of his life in his parish, there will be an uncertainty and frequent disproportion in his work—in the amount of time and thought given to different parts of it; and he may be one of those men who fail because they apply themselves with great zeal, now to one thing, now to another, according to what seems to have vogue and reputation at the time.

I have sometimes pictured to myself a young man, with true personal equipment as a minister of Christ, coming into a parish that had been given into his charge and asking himself afresh, *What am I here for?*—clearing his mind of all traditionary ideas and customary expectations, refusing to be the slave of these, and applying himself to know truly what he should try to do for these people in the confidence that he will have God with him in doing it. It has seemed to me that a man who began his ministry in this manner might have an originality in it, certainly a sincerity and definiteness in it, a right proportion and a true choice of methods, which would distinguish it from many. Such a ministry, if by God's grace it had also growth and persistence, might leave a mark where it had been exercised such as we are now and then impressed by when we find it left on the common life of a whole district by some man of a generation before us, whose memory among the people has a savour of truth, of grace, of human

helpfulness, of all that comes from balanced godliness, which testifies powerfully to the man and to the faith he lived in. And the impulse of such a ministry is not limited to the district in which it has been exercised, but is carried far in the hearts of individual men and women and revives through them in another generation, perhaps in another land.

What shall we say, then, is the right aim of the Christian minister among his people? Shall we say it is *to save their souls*? This is perhaps the answer that most readily occurs to us. This is the form in which saintly men of former days who are the glory of our profession expressed their aim of life. And I do not profess that we can find any truer or grander form. For this end our Lord came into the world, to seek and to save that which was lost, and He said, 'As my Father sent Me: so have I sent you.' But the language of religion suffers in the course of common use. It gets degraded: or a part of its real meaning is taken for the whole. Misunderstandings and hurtful associations gather about it. I would therefore prefer to express what we are seeking in a different manner. I would say that the aim of the Christian minister is to produce a certain character in his people: it is *to produce Christlike character*. I say this with the more confidence that we know it to be God's aim in His great redeeming work. So

it is expressed in the Epistle to the Romans—that *they 'may be conformed to the image of His Son'* (viii. 29). Is not this a purpose worthy of God, and in which is implied a very high thought of what men are capable of? Could anything testify more to a high capacity in human souls than that God should aim at conforming them to the image of Christ—making them sons of God after His likeness, and so bringing *many* sons unto glory? And when we have stated this as the aim of the Christian minister—to produce in his people Christlike character—to make them like Christ—we see that this aim *includes* the saving of their souls. For souls made like to Christ cannot perish. And souls which are without likeness to Christ cannot be saved. Nothing but goodness is well pleasing to God; and only that goodness which is likeness to Christ is satisfying to Him. Without likeness to Christ men cannot escape the rejection of God,

The aim of the Christian minister being thus fixed upon—to produce in the people committed to his charge Christlike character, the character that is well pleasing to God, that most blesses the world and makes life in the world most blessed, the character that alone prepares for the life that is everlasting—I would inquire next what means the minister is to use for the production of this character. And first I would say that *improvement* in

men's character may be produced by various means. For example, we may set ourselves to work upon their sense of right and wrong—that sense which forms the inner sanctuary of their being, and without some measure of which no human soul is made. We may preach with a view to the cultivation of that sense, in order that they may keenly feel the beauty and glory of well-doing, the foulness and shame of wrong-doing. We may preach the Law—the Law of God—His Holy character of which that Law is a transcript—responsibility to Him, the reward of well-doing, and the punishment of evil-doing. We may bring home to men the fact that they have to do with God as answerable to Him and the plain consequences of this fact. These are instruments which will greatly affect men's thoughts and character, especially if we who preach feel deeply ourselves what wrong is and what right is: the awful difference between them when God is thought of behind them: the different marks they leave on men's lives and the different destinies they lead to in this world and the next.

And we may preach the Law to men in different ways. We may preach it by expounding it in detail: by applying it to their daily life, telling out its sanctions and taking for our guidance the wealth of precept which we find in the Old Testament and, carried to higher perfection, in the New. Or again, we may preach it by the examples of men's lives.

The human heart is readily affected by example. Much warning it will feel in the sad story of some lives, and high impulse it will receive from the noble example of other lives. By preaching such as this, in a word, by *ethical* preaching, we may produce great regrets for sin and great desires for better life. And indeed, without such an element strongly present in our preaching, we shall not have that moral atmosphere and moral sensibility which are necessary to the effectiveness of any other preaching. We must make God's holy character known, and what that character requires in the thought and life of men. We must make men keenly conscious of that voice of God, calling to goodness and warning against sin, which speaks in every human bosom.

But, my young brethren, we have more powerful means of which to avail ourselves than these. When a minister of Christ looks a congregation in the face or sets them before him in his private thoughts, apprehending by the sympathy that comes of self-knowledge what is their moral state, what their temptations are, their memories, their habits, their weaknesses—what their division of heart, the moral paralysis of many and the worldliness of their life—when he so sets his congregation before him and asks, What is there—or, Is there anything that would transform these people, that would carry their souls in the highest direction, that would unite the divided heart of each and impel it freely

to righteousness? Is there a secret by which this might be accomplished? I have no doubt of the answer. This is the secret, that they be enabled to feel themselves at one with God—that they be reconciled, and know that they are reconciled, to the great and holy God from whom they have been alienated inwardly, and of whom they have often been in fear—that their hearts should thrill with the knowledge that they are now in friendship with Him, and that their alienation from Him is past. Enough by itself to work a great moral change is this, that the walls of separation between the soul and God are fallen down. No one ever believes this to have happened without a great desire filling his heart of living henceforth with God in righteousness.

And how is this sense of reconciliation to be brought about? I answer, by testimony to Christ our Lord as Mediator and Reconciler between God and man—by testimony that He is the propitiation for our sins, that God made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him—by a testimony reaching the most hopeless sinner that there is a complete justification with God for him, even this, to be justified freely by the blood of Christ.

And when we preach this we do not mean something at the judgment day, but *now*, and we do not mean merely sins forgiven and the account with

God cleared up to to-day, so that when to-morrow the man fails in righteousness, he falls back again into the fear and terror of God's condemnation. No: we mean the permanent standing of a forgiven man—a man reconciled to the Father in heaven—and we mean that he should know this by the testimony of Christ's Spirit.

This has been a powerful message. Powerfully it has drawn men's hearts and attracted them to Christ to find justification with God, friendship with God, the abiding favour of God, so near and free. And when men have turned from the world to Christ in order to receive this, when they have thus made it a present and sure possession, the joy of this possession is one of the deepest the soul is capable of, *and also the most powerfully moralising*. The soul is won to God and at the same moment to righteousness. The change is made from a sinner, or a servant obeying under a weight of responsibility, to a son, and this change is not only in the attitude to God, but in the attitude to the whole truth and law of God, that which before was hated as a burden being now loved, rejoiced in, and diligently sought.

This, then, is the word and message which we count our first and greatest instrument in changing the character of hearers, and inspiring them with strong desire to be like Christ—the message that by Christ and His blood friendship with God is

brought within the reach of every man now, so that instead of seeing friendship with God and peace with God far off at the end of a long effort to improve and sanctify his life, he may see this near and immediately attainable. This is the message and instrument by which especially miracles have been wrought in the region of character. Moral miracles are still wrought, and the minister of Christ has a right to aim at, and indeed to count on working them. For did not our Lord say, 'He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and *greater works than these shall he do because I go to the Father*'? The minister of Christ may preach the gospel of reconciliation, and when men believe and know that they have been reconciled to God by Jesus Christ, the sky of their life is changed, their whole soul is set on so living as to abide in that friendship for ever, and to be worthy of it. We cannot fully analyse the miracle of this moral change: we do not profess to explain it: but we know that the gospel of present forgiveness and present reconciliation through Jesus Christ alone produces it. Listen accordingly to the words of St. Paul in which he describes our vocation as Christian ministers. 'We are ambassadors for Christ; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.' Listen also to the message of John Wesley by which he changed the face of the England of last century: 'Faith is the beginning

of all good in thee, O man! First believe in Jesus the propitiation for thy sins.'

I go on to name another powerful means which the minister of Christ has to use in producing Christlike character among his hearers. The first I have named is a reconciliation that has come down from heaven, too great and blessed for men to work out for themselves. The second I name is another thing coming down from heaven which makes a character possible for men, which would not be possible for them without it. What is this which I now indicate? It is *grace*. What do we mean by *grace*? This is one of those words which one fears to use, it has so many true meanings; there are also so gross misunderstandings of it. And again, it is a word that so many people say and repeat and pass on without stopping to think what it really signifies. What does it mean? Or in what sense do we use it now? I answer in this sense, as meaning *moral help from outside ourselves—from above us—from heaven*.

Is a man's moral nature like his bodily constitution which he gets by natural inheritance, whose strength and vitality he may be careful of, and train well, and use well, but which cannot have its power added to from outside? No, I answer; and this is our next great gospel message—that our moral and spiritual part is not unchangeable like our bodily constitution, that what we are

born with may be radically changed : strength may be *added to it from outside*, and our *moral vitality* may be wonderfully increased. Grace is the divine gift by which this is done. And when our hearers know the word in its meaning and relations, when they know their own moral weakness, poverty, and defilement, when they know, in some small measure, what grace does to remedy that moral weakness and to transform us inwardly from impure to pure, from cold to loving, from base to noble, then they will name the word 'grace' with reverence and exceeding thankfulness. There will seem no word so precious as this word 'grace.' They will understand how Christian scholars have loved to trace its history and to see even in this a sign of the greatness of Christ's work in the world.

Another name for this divine gift in the New Testament is *Life*. Grace is the favourite word with St. Paul. Life is the favourite word with St. John. It is he who reports to us the saying of Jesus, 'I am come that they may have *life*, and that they may have it abundantly.' Into this new life we enter by a new birth. So great is the change, our Lord describes it as a being born anew, or born from above. He himself is the only Source and the only Maintainer of the life of which He speaks. 'I am the Bread of life'—'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood ye have not life in yourselves.' 'The witness is this,' says St. John,

‘that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life.’

So then, we who are ambassadors for Christ are to proclaim that there is a divine reconciliation come down from heaven for men in their estrangement from God, and that there is a new power of moral life come into the world—both of these by our Lord Jesus Christ—both accessible by communion with Him—and we may speak of both under the name of *grace*—‘the grace wherein we stand’ as Christian men—because they are both divine *gifts* which have their source in the exceeding great desire of God that we should be conformed to the image of His Son.

I do not mean that grace alone is to be preached by us. The law is still the tutor to bring men to Christ. A powerful ethical element in preaching is most valuable and necessary. A man who can appeal to what is noble in human nature, to that in men which recognises and approves the good, and responds to high ideals when they are presented to it—such a man will carry many hearers a good way forward in habit of life and in aspiration. He will sometimes carry them very far. And he will accomplish in them still more largely that great preparation for the gospel which St. Paul reckoned the chief work of the law. He will stir

in them the pain of self-reproach on account of sin in their life and nature. He will dispel the self-content which comes of ignorance of better things. He will make the gospel of the grace of God very welcome to them. And even after they have accepted this gospel and stand in it, a man of gift for ethical preaching may do them great good. Here it was perhaps that the Evangelicals of former days made serious omission. They knew so well the great impulse to righteousness from friendship with God: they knew so well how again and again the preaching of reconciliation, by reviving the glad sense of it, powerfully revives the zeal for well-doing, that they depended too entirely on this impulse. So well did they enter into our Lord's principle, first make the tree good and its fruit will be good, that they did not enough guide the consciences of their hearers into moral truth: they did not see to it sufficiently that the moral standards of their hearers in different spheres of life were high. They did not provide ideals of conduct for the complexity of modern life, by which the whole of it might be claimed for Christ, and by which the great impulse they communicated might be turned to full account.

But though ethical preaching can never be dispensed with, and it will always be hurtful if this element in preaching is weak, you must choose, you must decide, whether or not you are to be first

of all preachers of the *grace of God*: whether or not the instruments you are to use are those mighty, supernatural instruments of which the Cross is the centre, which so surpass all others in their power to humble men and to exalt them, to cast them down and to raise them up.

I read with profound assent what the venerable Delitzsch said in a confession of his faith shortly before his death, under the title of 'The deep gulf between the old theology and the new.' He declared of these two, Nature and Grace, that they constitute one of those dualities which defy unification. They stand in fundamental contraposition. And you must choose between the preaching that does not transcend nature and the preaching that is also of grace. I think it is Emerson who has furnished us with this striking and fruitful aphoristic sentence: 'Sow the act and reap the habit: sow the habit and reap the character: sow the character and reap the destiny.' There is no need to stint our admiration of the wealth or the seriousness of ethical truth that is contained in this sentence, or of the point with which it is expressed in these successive clauses. With profit we might strive to bring home to our people the reading of life that is here, and the serious meaning of each statement: 'Sow the act and reap the habit: sow the habit and reap the character: sow the character and reap the destiny.' True: solemnly.

true: inevitably true in each step. But this sentence of Emerson is interesting to us also for what it entirely wants. It entirely wants that very thing which you are to preach if you are to be messengers of the grace of God in Christ. It contains no word of anything but what is natural, while we are called and entitled to preach what is supernatural—that in the living Christ, in whom we call men to believe, there is a divine power of deliverance and salvation, a breaking of bonds and an impulse of new life often comparable at its first reception to the experience of Peter when at the touch of the angel his chains fell off him and the prison door opened to him of its own accord.

But you may feel inclined to say, What of some other great Christian doctrines which have not been named? What of the Incarnation and the Fatherhood of God, for example? Are we not to preach these? Will not the preaching of God's Fatherhood even suffice and be a substitute for explicit teaching of atonement, which is at present a stumbling-block to many? Will not the preaching of God's Fatherhood find a response in the primary instincts of the heart?

I have to reply that I am not now setting before you the truths of revelation in their order or even according to their value in a theological system. I am not entering on the question whether the

doctrine of the Incarnation or that of the Atonement is the greater Christian doctrine. Nor am I forgetting that the Fatherhood of God and the whole doctrine of grace which I have indicated are in full harmony. The doctrine of grace may be said to be implicit in a true doctrine of the Fatherhood. If God be the Father of men, it is natural and to be expected that He should go after the lost. It is natural that He should save them even at the cost of the blood of His Son, and with the gift of the Spirit of grace. I am aware also that there are souls whose faith in the Fatherhood of God may be of a kind which practically implies atonement even when it is not explicitly held. But my object at present is to set before you Christian truth, not as a system, but in the form and at the points at which it most reaches the need of men, and most powerfully affects human souls as they are, sinful and conscious of estrangement from God. I am trying to set it before you in the order or division, not that is scientific, but that is determined by its use in preaching. There the doctrine of the Atonement, while depending greatly for its very meaning on that of the Incarnation, will be found in a moral atmosphere like ours, and for the pressing needs of the human heart, far more powerful—indeed indispensable. Nor without it can the doctrine of God's Fatherhood be preached with assurance of the result, for

that Fatherhood needs this truth of Christ's atonement, which is its highest evidence, to be still its true exposition. The Fatherhood apart from the Atonement may be seriously misunderstood—may become a very shallow and defective conception. That 'definition of God,' as it has been called, in three words of the great prayer of Jesus, 'O righteous Father,' will not be truly apprehended unless the great manifestation of divine righteousness and divine mercy meeting in the Cross, the wrath of God against sin, and the propitiation which God sent His Son to make, be preached in the place and proportion used by the Apostles. The doctrine of the Atonement may be implicit in the conception of God's Fatherhood, to which some hearts cling; but the power of all Christian truth is increased tenfold when it becomes explicit and is clearly apprehended, and, in general, the souls of men need to be conscious of the blood of sprinkling before they can rightly respond to the doctrine of God's Fatherhood, and can cry with the full assurance of reconciled children, 'Abba, Father.'

I say again, you must choose—may God guide you rightly to choose—whether or not you are to be preachers specially of the *Grace of God in Jesus Christ*, preachers of the Cross, in the same sense in which Paul and Luther were preachers of it, furnished with the same 'power of God,'

not with any fragment of that only or any strained interpretation of their message.

And what I call you to is not only so to preach, but to have courage in it—courage to be clear—not to hide or compromise the truth you carry because you flinch before the opinion or the inclination of your hearers. Do not, I pray and warn you, try to hide the gulf between the world and the kingdom of God, or to make the passage from nature to grace a little one. Men still, as in our Lord's days, wish to be saved in their own way. They will often receive without objection preaching which aims at their improvement along lines of conduct on which they have already made progress. But they shrink and hesitate when they are called to take the great step from life in self to life in Christ—the great step to a present acceptance of a righteousness in Christ and in His blood.

Some of the opponents of Christianity have ridiculed or rebuked our preaching of forgiveness on the ground of its being too easy for men to believe in and immoral in its consequences. When you offer men forgiveness now by the blood of Christ—such a forgiveness as David asked in the words, 'Wash thou me and I shall be whiter than snow'—the justification of which Paul said, 'Being justified by faith we have peace with God'—you will *not* find men accept it so easily. You will

not find them feel it immoral. They feel rather that to accept it now puts them under such a debt to Christ, and lays such a demand upon them for consecration and purity of life, that they hesitate to receive it. Our hearers may also feel it stern preaching when we expound the words, 'Ye must be born again,' and when such sayings of Paul as these are quoted, 'If any man is in Christ he is a new creature: the old things have passed away; behold, they are become new': 'I have been crucified with Christ, yet I live: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God.' But we cannot (said an eminent preacher of this generation)—we cannot spare men having to take the *leap of faith*, and if you have the courage needed for this, the courage that comes of a great sense of the blessing and the power there is in the Gospel really accepted, be assured of one thing, you will have the consciences of your hearers on your side, and the testimony of God's Spirit with you in their hearts. Nothing corresponds to the greatness of their conscious need but such new standing and new life as are brought by the Gospel. You have also this to embolden you—your preaching will be in the line of God's gracious purposes for men. 'It pleased God by the foolishness of the preaching (*i.e.* of the thing preached) to save them that believe.' This Gospel is (says St. Paul) the power

of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. And according to the promise of Jesus which we quoted, 'Greater works than these shall he do because I go to My Father,' things will be accomplished by your word—some of them perhaps soon, almost as soon as your sowing of the word has begun, some of them late, after the seed has lain long dormant, or apparently dead, in the soil of the heart—things will be accomplished which will astonish you and humble you and gladden you; things which you feel utterly beyond yourself to have done.

And if you persevere in this direction you will have the high consciousness that you are, in your measure, a preacher of the same company with Paul, and you will escape the despondent feeling about the ministry which we see take possession of such men as one whose biography was lately published (I need not further indicate him), whose preaching, earnest indeed and effective up to a certain level, a model of form in preaching, yet being hardly at all more than ethical, had never any wonder of success in it, and brought the preacher gradually to content himself with a somewhat sad purpose of trying *to make men a little better*.

You will escape, too, the humiliation of finding that while, after being years in your parish, you have but made people a little better and served them in

various ministries of moral and temporal good, some unlettered evangelist with his bluntly spoken message, or some company of women speaking with an emotional belief from a few Bible texts, work for many of your people the great miracle which you have not seen wrought by yourself.

I have been confirmed in my choice of a subject for this first address to you by reading the answer given by Turner, the great English painter, to John Ruskin, when the latter asked how he might succeed in his art: 'Know what you have to do, and do it.' Ruskin himself writes, 'This is the great principle of success in every direction of human effort. For I believe that failure is less frequently attributable to either insufficiency of means or impatience of labour, than to a confused understanding of the thing actually to be done.' Not without reason therefore have we begun with the question, *What is the aim of the Christian Ministry.* The answer I have ventured to give is, To produce Christlike character, to save men by making them sons of God indeed, having in view the divine purpose in Christ, 'to bring many sons unto glory.'

Do not be drawn aside from this, let me still say, by such an idea, as is now sometimes urged on us ministers with an imperative urgency, that we should imitate the prophets of the Old Testament and give pronouncements in regard to our political

or social order—that we should use the power of our pulpits to denounce the faults of that order and place ourselves on the side of new social arrangements. We may indeed take the prophets for our examples in their forthsetting of the two great and splendid verities of the *grace of God* and the *righteousness* which He requires; but for anything beyond this, let us recollect that *character* is our aim and goal—not to be judges and dividers over men, but to produce Christlike character. Our work is an inward work: it is to open a spring of divine life in the souls of men: it is to bring men into the large liberty and zeal for righteousness that come of their being, and knowing themselves to be, sons of God. Our influence from the pulpit on the political and social order should be great, but it should be indirect. If we produce new men—in proportion as we do this—the social order will advance towards Christ's ideal kingdom: but until men are new men, outward change may be premature and undesirable.¹

¹ Perhaps no minister of the past generation took a more influential or honourable part in politics for many years than Dr. Dale of Birmingham. The following words of his are therefore a weighty confirmation of what is said above:—

‘Speaking as one who for many years took an active part among the obscurer members of a great political party, I think that we must often be doubtful whether political and social schemes which are full of promise may not, from causes which human sagacity is unable to anticipate, turn out mischievous. In

And my object has further been that, in seeking this aim, you should use the right weapons, and especially the weapons of greatest power with which God has furnished us—that you should not be content, as some are, or drop down, as some do from want of faith, to the use of only the weaker weapons. Our weapons may be divided (I admit in a rough and general manner) into two kinds—the Evangelical and the Ethical, the Supernatural and the Natural, the Christian Moral Dynamic and the Christian Moral Ideal, and it has been my earnest desire to urge on you to make use of both, to testify to you of the great sphere that is open to you if you make proof of both, and especially to urge you to make proof in your ministry of those truths of *reconciliation* and *grace* by which the New Testament is pervaded, which were so mighty in the mouths of Apostles, and are still so mighty wherever they are proclaimed in faith of their preciousness.

endeavouring to draw individual men to Christ—in disciplining to Christian intelligence, to righteousness and sanctity, those who already acknowledge His authority—we cannot go wrong. Every man that has received the Spirit of Christ, and is eager to do the will of Christ, is a new power for bringing in more just and more gracious conditions of economic and social life. John Wesley and George Whitefield did more for the social redemption of England than all the politicians of this century and the last, whose names are associated with great reforms; under God, they created those moral and spiritual forces which have rendered all reforms possible.'—*Fellowship with Christ*, p. 211.

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If I were to concentrate what I have sought to say in one word of Scripture, I should do it by passing on to each of you that charge of Paul to Timothy — ‘Make *full* proof of thy ministry.’

LECTURE II

THE PRIMARY QUALIFICATION FOR THE MINISTRY, AND THE PRIMARY CONDITION OF POWER IN IT

HAVING spoken in my former lecture of the aim of the Christian minister, and of the chief means he is to use with that aim in view, I shall attempt now to speak of the minister himself, of his fitness and qualification.

What is the primary qualification for the Christian ministry? To this there is really only one answer. I do not doubt that other lecturers have spoken of it. Should it then be omitted in order to avoid repetition and overlapping in these successive courses? I think not. Each lecturer *must* speak of it; and there is room for each to present it in the form in which it has been brought home to himself. Here, in fact, if anywhere, each lecturer will have a special message of his own to carry; and, for my part, I believe I shall best convey mine by means of a narrative.

A young licentiate came to be assistant minister in a small town containing fifteen hundred people,

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with about five hundred more in the country portion of the parish. He came on a monthly engagement, and with reason to expect that he would be only a short time there. The first night that he found himself settled in a lodging, he wrote in his pocket-book this short note of his mind at the time :—

‘ Begun with great purposes of diligence, devotion, self-distrust, economy of time by early rising, prayerful living and labouring ; and in hopes of so coming with God’s help to be able to preach the Gospel with profit—to be carried over the difficulties and sinking courage of the present to usefulness and singleness of eye and aim.’

He was quite inexperienced. His work was to preach one sermon each Sunday, to conduct a weekly prayer-meeting in a church room, to visit the parish—in fact, to do the bulk of the work for the parish minister, who was elderly. He applied himself to this diligently, wrote sermons carefully, spoke extempore after preparation at the prayer-meeting, and visited steadily. The people received him kindly ; the prayer-meeting grew in attendance, mostly of mill-workers, old and young, from the crowded houses near the church. His addresses at the prayer-meeting—as simple and serious as he could make them—were well listened to. His sermons in church were those of a beginner, spoken without any oratorical power, without spiritual

authority, and with only unobtrusiveness to commend them.

The change to him from academic life was very great; and as the months passed and he looked from the door of his lodging towards the dingy lamps of the little town, so suggestive of poverty and narrow, cheerless life, his heart sank for a moment at the thought, Am I to spend a whole winter here? As a matter of fact, he spent four years there, very much against his own original plan and ambition. But at the end of the four years, he left the place with many regrets. He had become deeply convinced that it was by a gracious Providence that he had been taken so long aside from the world, out of reach of the judgments and criticisms which would have fettered him, that he had escaped a publicity which would have been fatal to him, that in his first sphere of work, which leaves a mark on every man, he had had the advantage of constant religious intercourse with the poor, and daily contact with the plain realities of life. He looked on that place all his life after as having been much more to him, in preparation for the ministry, than the Divinity Hall had been.

It came about in this way. Gradually as he studied, preached, and visited, there grew and deepened in his mind a sense of a great personal want. He was not conscious of preaching what he did not believe. He believed what he said to be

true, but he felt that his own possession of the things of which he was called to speak was very slight. He did not possess them as the New Testament assumed they should be possessed. And while his responsibilities did press on him, and he gave much time and effort to the duties of the ministry, he felt that he had not *given himself* to it, that his own personal aims were first with him. 'We will *give ourselves* continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.' By such expressions as this, he was somehow rebuked at heart, and he could not read the Scripture for any length of time without being made uneasy. The citadel of life in the *will* had not been yielded to Christ, and for months he had experience of that inward pain which is like no other, which the man who feels it is driven to revive by prayer and reading; that pain which he suffers from and yet cannot but seek, the pain of conviction of sin, of discovering the deep sinfulness of the heart's alienation from God, and of its refusing to Christ that rule within to which he has the right.

Books were much read by him at this time, two of which may be named, *The Morning and Night Watches*, by a well-known minister of our Church, and the *Life of Dr. Arnold of Rugby*. They were read with alternate pain in the growing conviction of a great personal want, and encouragement from the noble and inspiring pattern of Christian life

and ministry afforded especially by the book last named, showing as it does a man at once most religious and most human, of true Christian faith along with varied interest in life; a man of whom it was happily said, 'He loved his family as if he had no friends, his friends as if he had no family, and his country as if he had neither family nor friends.' Another thing yet had influence upon the young licentiate I tell you of, namely, the effect which even such ministry as he was exercising among the poor people began to have. Cases occurred of great change in behaviour and new interest in religion which perplexed parents or relatives, and when he was asked to intervene, to converse and to advise where some one had been 'taking things too much to heart' (as it was expressed), he could not but perceive that some among his hearers had gone a step ahead of himself, and had attained a higher spiritual standing.

About a year after his coming to the town, a Communion Sunday was near, and seeing only one way out of his spiritual struggle and 'slough of despond,' he earnestly sought help from God, and came to the Communion Table with these words of St. Paul as the expression of his unreserved self-surrender, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' He had but one thought at that table, to present himself there withholding nothing in his soul and life from their rightful Lord.

In the days that immediately followed there came to him the assurance, of which he had been destitute before, that the full grace and privilege of a standing in Christ were his. It seemed sometimes like a dream and beyond belief, that the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life were now his. He almost believed not for joy. But again, conscious of his truth to Christ in what he had done, his mind was flooded, as it were, with the sense of Christ's truth to him, and of the promises of the New Testament being verily his. He felt a wholly new freedom for the service of Christ and pleasure in it. His study of the Scriptures was begun from a new point of view. Questions of faith which he thought he had mastered for examination at the Divinity Hall, he now went into with an interest that was entirely fresh. In fact, he did not seem to have considered them before. He had to build up his scheme of belief from the foundation. The New Testament rules of conduct, especially in the Gospels and in the ends of St. Paul's Epistles, had an exceeding beauty to him, and became as his necessary food for the support and guidance of life. In six months he made a progress in practical knowledge of the Bible not only greater than in any such time before, but greater than in as many years after. And now he could sometimes preach. He could speak sometimes as an ambassador of Christ, and beseech men to be reconciled to God.

Naturally oppressed by shyness, and having gifts rather for teaching and clear exposition—naturally unable to assume, still less to counterfeit, authority or urgency in speaking from the pulpit—he now had upon him sometimes that pressure of spirit from the truth of God and the need of men which is better far than any natural boldness or oratorical gift. In a single word, he had now the primary qualification for the Christian ministry.

After much consideration I have been able to think of no better way in which I could declare to you what is of first necessity for your ministry than to tell you this ineradicable memory which, as you have already guessed, is from my own life. I look back upon it with (I think I may say) increasing gratitude to God, and increasing sense of its value as I advance in years. More and more I see that all that I have had of real good in my life's course had its beginning then and grew out of that. And yet, I am not sure that I could have set it before you, or would have felt it right to do so, but for another thing I have learned—that this is no peculiar experience of my own. Such an experience, varying in form and circumstance, but at centre the same, you will discover as opportunity is given to you, to have had place in the history of all men who do work of spiritual value in the Church of Christ and of almost all who even become prominent in it—at least in our day. Did you

observe, for example, in the fine address by the Moderator at the close of the General Assembly of 1897, how in the opening of it he recalled an early surrender of himself to God for the ministry of His Son—a deeper self-surrender to which the immediate prompting was the unexpected warmth of praise which a College exercise of his received from a Professor. To Dr. Mair we owe the authoritative book on Church Law, and many people might have thought that this fact alone accounted for his eminent place. But he himself read his own life more deeply, and he evidently felt that the incident he told of contained in germ the whole of his career, with whatever success had come to him. You may without hesitation assume such an incident sacred in the memory of every man whom you see rendering great service to the Church.

Not your success only in the ministry depends on your making a true self-surrender to Christ our Lord, your *happiness* in it depends upon that, and a thing even more precious still, your *truth of character*. Without such self-surrender you cannot know the joy and blessing of which you are to preach. You can never feel within you the great liberty of full harmony with your calling; your heart will not know the visitations of an ideal joy in the consciousness that, humble as you may feel your powers to be, you are in the noble fellowship of the true ambassadors of Christ. And, let me

especially warn you, a man who is in the highest profession and not in full harmony with it in his spirit, who is obliged to do its duties and to try to do them well, yet is conscious of a want in himself—that man not only suffers as a man must do in such a case; he soon *deteriorates in character*. It is indeed a terrible thing in its effects on our character to be saying strongly from the pulpit truths to which we have not submitted ourselves. The man who does that soon becomes a worse man by far than a man like him who remains outside the profession of the ministry. Instead of experiencing the growth in apprehension of spiritual truth and all the other noble growths that reward a true ministry, this man becomes year by year more limited, more blind, more jealous, more radically untrue, and is found often keeping up a fight for some half Christian form of belief which commends itself to him really because it does not demand more than the tone and attitude of life which he is secretly conscious of in himself.

Let me, with all the earnestness I can use, warn every student of the havoc that is wrought on all nobler elements in a man's character by the exercise of a minister's calling year by year while the inward self-surrender to Christ, which that calling requires, has never been truly made.

And there is one other thing, a secret thing, which will make your position, as I think, pitiable,

if you have not this primary qualification. The bulk of your congregation may hardly know that you want it, or mind your wanting it; you may acquit yourself so as to satisfy them. But a select few of your congregation, who have a spiritual mind and who live in the fellowship of Christ, will discern that you lack 'the one thing.' They will not say it; they are not of the sort to utter it in tattle; but they will pity you; they will be tender to you, but will sadly feel the while that you want what makes the ministry a thing of God and a joy; the nearer you come to it in diligent duty, the more will they inwardly regret on your account. Which of you (I am sure I may ask) could bear such a position?

Am I now bidding you stand in subservience to the judgment of your people? God forbid! I would have you high and free above all talk and tattle, whether of the irreligious or of the would-be very religious. But have you read Mozley's memorable sermon on the *Unspoken Judgment of Mankind*? 'Christians,' he says, 'who are endowed with the spirit of holiness, and who have with that gift the spirit also of wisdom and knowledge, can see where the heart is right in others, and where it is not; where the aims are pure and where they are corrupted and alloyed, where a man is a single-hearted disciple of Christ, and where he is double-minded.' All this belongs to the power which 'he

that is spiritual' has, who 'judgeth all things.' Mozley goes on to speak of a like judgment 'which is hidden at the bottom of human hearts generally,' and he says to us, 'Fear this judgment; for if it is against you, you are indeed in sad case. Within the consciences of men is the tribunal which condemns you. You may be carried aloft on the conventional judgment of the world, absolving you upon its own rules; your explanations may have done everything and been omnipotent; you may stand well and without a blot, and have an external verdict supporting you everywhere, but in the inner heart of man there still sits the mute judge who discerns and speaks not . . . formidable as a prophet though he holds no court as yet upon earth. Fear this hidden adversary; and if it be not too late, deal with him quickly whiles thou art in the way with him.'

Having spoken of the primary personal qualification for the work of the Christian ministry, I go on to speak of *the primary condition of power* in that ministry. What is the main secret of spiritual power—especially of power in preaching? Is it mental ability, and clear mastery of truth? Or is it something of tenderness and sympathy in the constitutional disposition? Or is it that indescribable something which we call the oratorical gift, which enables a man to impress himself on his hearers, and makes a commonplace word fresh with meaning

when it comes from his lips? I answer, I am aware that all these may be elements of power, but the primary condition of spiritual power and influence in the line of the Gospel of Christ is none of these. It is—I say with all confidence—*singleness of purpose*. It is, in fact, the prolongation into the work of life of that surrender of ourselves to Christ as our Master and Lord of which I have already spoken. It is the displacement of our natural self-seeking by an undivided heart which seeks not its own but the things of Christ. It is what our Lord, in His great prayer, asked for His disciples, next after asking that they might be kept in His name. ‘Sanctify them’ (He said), or, as it is more exactly translated, ‘*Consecrate them in the truth. . . .* For their sakes I consecrate Myself that they also may be consecrated in truth.’ What He solicits for them is a heart entirely devoted to the task they will have to fulfil in the world, a heart from which are absent all interested aims and selfish purposes. It is in this sense also, I believe, that St Paul says, ‘If a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master’s use, prepared unto every good work.’

You have perhaps heard the saying—a true one—that the right arm of the minister is *character*, and when men come to feel regarding him, not merely that he has a good moral character according

to the standard of the world, but that there is in him an absence of self-seeking, a disregard of his temporal interest, a superiority to ordinary worldly motives, a dominating aim and purpose which cannot be explained by natural human ambition, in a word, when in their contact with him they feel *that he is one who has overcome the world*, they accord him, consciously or unconsciously, a strange authority. If the motives by which his life is guided are felt by them to be drawn from a higher world than this, in their secret heart they fear him and honour him. His life and his word have power with their spirits. Men of all ranks equally bow to this power. Men of the most culture have the keenest perception to recognise it: but those who are least aware of the cause feel the power in their heart.

In the experience of the man himself, when he is in the attitude of perfect singleness of purpose, he finds a wonderful freedom and fruitfulness in his thoughts; his mind is replenished, as it were, out of 'heavenly urns'; the truth he has to deal with comes to him as a thing of power; it flows in upon his mind; its illustration and its adaptation to his people become easy; his judgment too, and his wisdom in method are heightened; and especially in the act of preaching power comes to the man who is single in aim. If he is fully conscious of speaking, not for himself, but for Christ and for the

souls whom Christ has redeemed, his courage mounts, he is unfettered by the judgment of his hearers, he sees the glory and beauty of the truth of God with undimmed vision, he is lightened of the heavy burden of self-consciousness, and the word preached comes from him in that perfect harmony between it and the personality of the speaker which makes a pulpit message efficacious. I hardly can venture to speak up to the truth of the power in men's souls that the perfectly single-minded preacher may exercise. His power, which I have but slightly indicated, is due partly to natural causes which we all understand. It is due chiefly to a cause above nature, namely, to the presence in him of the Spirit of God, working in and witnessing with his spirit. Being a vessel fit for the Master's use, he is used by the Master, and he preaches 'in the Spirit.' This is no superstition; nor is it a feature only of apostolic times; it is an element of all true preaching: and I believe some men at some times are so raised by it above themselves that the occasions are remembered with a certain awe both by hearers and by preacher.

If you, whom I now address, would have spiritual power in your ministry, if you would save souls, if you would build up and comfort souls, if you would deeply influence for good the life of a community, you *must* attain to and keep singleness of purpose. You will find it most difficult: but

you must contend for it as for your life: if, that is, you would escape the condemnation of a powerless ministry. No doubt a man who has the primary qualification we spoke of, and has yielded himself to Christ, cannot be thought of as quite without this singleness of purpose in his work. But you will find it assailed in a thousand ways:—by the temptation, for example, to seek to gain popular applause; the temptation to aim at swelling the numbers of a congregation or gratifying the people's pride in their minister; the temptation to try to win the praise of the stranger or visitor in the congregation, or to be considered intellectually able by the academic hearer, or to satisfy the cultivated, the titled, and the wealthy; or, yet again, the temptation to pile up a reputation, or to maintain one that has been gained. The best men, who have the keenest inward vision, will testify to the frequency and the power of such temptations. And I cannot tell you that they will cease with your youth. Often it happens that a man relaxes his watchfulness against them, and one who in his youth gave up for the ministry, even cheerfully, an attractive worldly career or fine worldly prospects, now, as years advance, finds himself tempted to be sensitive about his place in the Church, his comparative honour, or name, or public consideration. If a minister is popular as a preacher, he is liable to what Spurgeon called in a sermon

preached during his early fame, 'Temptations of the pinnacle'; and a very low pinnacle is sufficient to bring these temptations. If, on the other hand, a minister is not popular, he is liable to the intrusion of jealousy, with its miserable pains and meannesses. I have not forgotten a picture I saw long ago in an illustrated edition of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. It represented Vanity Fair and the goods which the pilgrims on the way through it were tempted to buy. In the foreground of the picture was a man making offer to Christian and Faithful of a cathedral, a pastoral staff, and other signs of clerical promotion; and often in what one has seen and known of ministerial careers since then, one has been reminded that the prizes of the Church may be as real temptations as those of the world.

I read lately some extracts from a very sad estimate of the present state of the stage and the theatrical profession, which was given to an interviewer by the foremost and most experienced dramatic critic of the day. This sentence especially caught my attention: 'The theatrical profession induces the vain and egotistical which is in all of us to a degree that would scarcely be credited by the outsider.' When I read that, I remembered that our sacred profession has, in common with that of the stage, the temptations of constant publicity, constant praise or blame, trying popularity, trying

unpopularity ; and I felt an inward pang in knowing that, while the vain and egotistical is indeed in all of us, the least indulgence of it dishonours and weakens us who are in the ministry in an unspeakable manner.

How are you to cultivate this single-mindedness which we have called the chief condition of power in preaching? And I say, yet again, it *is* the chief element of power. Eloquence and oratorical gift by themselves are not to be compared with it. There is something in the pleasure which skilled oratory gives to the hearer, apart from its message, that endangers its real efficacy, and I am persuaded that the spiritual result of oratorical preaching is often strangely small—to the great sadness and humiliation sometimes of the gifted speaker himself. But preaching that is transparently and through and through single-minded, in which the preacher's soul is not vexed by one intrusive thought of *how* his sermon is judged—nay, even preaching thus far single-minded that the man obviously struggles against self-consciousness in a true desire to do good—of such preaching there never fails to be some spiritual result.

How, I ask again, are you to cultivate this? You can secure it only in raising your whole character and by the means appropriate to that—by prayer, by communion with the Lord Jesus, by study of the Scriptures (which are steeped in single-

ness of aim), and by the reading of biographies of eminent Christian men, a kind of reading which will enable you to live, as regards your spirit, in the best and highest company. Also you will take special means to keep your *preaching* pure. Think of this great business as one of *barter*. You must part with and give up all the pleasure of vain glory if you would have the pure and eternal joy of saving and blessing men. You cannot have these both, and you must habitually barter the earthly for the heavenly.

One time when this must be done is in the preparation of a sermon. At first, let me suppose, in writing a sermon you are aiming true, and you start well. Then, conscious of a good beginning, you are assailed by the temptation to make this a *fine sermon*: immediately your aim is marred, and the sermon from this point cools and deadens. It is a fact of experience that every sermon made with a view to being a great sermon or a fine sermon turns out a failure; usually a visible failure and humiliation, always a spiritual failure.

Another critical time is before actual delivery of the sermon. I need hardly say this is a time for prayer, in which you will set your congregation before you in anticipation, thinking of individuals whom you know to be in some crisis of life or feeling, or thinking perhaps of listeners whose presence may be a temptation to you, and you will

break the power of this temptation by communing with the Lord about it beforehand, and confessing your own sins and defects, with prayer for that excellency of power which is of God and not of us. A young curate once asked an eminent bishop of the Church of England for some advice about his preaching. The bishop thought a little and then answered, 'Some men prepare their sermons; some prepare themselves.'¹ The curate took the hint, and though not, I think, a man of great ability, he is now one of the foremost preachers of that Church. There is an extraordinary difference in the feeling with which a sermon is spoken, and in its whole force and effect, if the night before, or the morning before, there has come into your heart a great access of desire that it be effective in the persuasion of your hearers. What is this but that God gives His Spirit to the man who asks with a true heart, and preaching in the Spirit is a thing entirely by itself for the effect it produces—an effect which the most finished and admired discourse may completely miss.

Another critical time yet is *after preaching*. Be prepared for a special in-rushing of worldly thoughts now that the tension of spirit required in preaching is relaxed. Do not let yourself become a prey to sensitive questionings about how you did,

¹ Told by Dr. Gott in his *Parish Priest of the Town*.

or self-congratulatory thoughts on what seemed a success; or guesses at the judgment on your preaching of some prominent hearers. All such thoughts allowed or indulged are nothing else than the welding of fetters by which your spirit will be bound and weakened in the future. Follow rather the word you have spoken into the hearts of hearers with prayer and hope for a spiritual result: let your thoughts go in the same direction in which you preached. I do not blame you if you wish for some indication of real good from your sermon. But use great delicacy in making inquiry, and set their right value on compliments. So long as you are told, 'You did very well, sir,' or 'You did better than—' some one who is alluded to, you may be sadly sure you have not succeeded: you are still understood to have gone up into the pulpit simply to acquit yourself well. Better far than such compliments is a reserve that does not venture to praise you, or a stammering word of gratitude that cannot rightly utter itself.

Persevere—if you would have power in your ministry—in resisting the temptations that would mar your singleness of aim. Realise, by prayer and reading, the sin and idolatry of seeking the praise of men in this work of the Kingdom of God; and, as the human heart must have honour, let your heart be set on 'the honour that cometh from God only.' Go on in this manner, and even early in

your ministry you will taste that success which always humbles a man—so much does he feel it to be beyond his own deserts—the success of bringing the light of God into a soul. The very memory of this, and the repetition of it, will make it easier for you in the future to make that exchange in your heart, that barter of the earthly for the heavenly, of the worldly success for the spiritual and eternal, which is the primary condition of liberty and power in the ministry.

I should like to read you a page from Phillips Brooks, generally accounted the greatest American preacher of his time, in which he expresses all this in such a way as I could not.

‘I put next to the fundamental necessity of character as an element of the preacher’s power the freedom from self-consciousness. My mind goes back to a young man whom I knew in the ministry, who did an amount of work at which men wondered, and who, dying early, left a power behind him whose influence will go on long after his name is forgotten; and the great feature of his character was his forgetfulness of self. He had not two questions to ask about every piece of work he did—first, “How shall I do it most effectively for others?” and, second, “How shall I do it most creditably to myself?” Only the first question ever seemed to come to him; and when a task was done so that it should most perfectly accomplish its designed

result, he left it and went on to some new task. There is a wonderful clearness and economy of force in such simplicity. No man ever yet thought whether he was preaching well without weakening his sermon. I think there are few higher or more delightful moments in a preacher's life than that which comes sometimes when, standing before a congregation and haunted by questionings about the merit of your preaching, which you hate but cannot drive away, at last, suddenly or gradually, you find yourself taken into the power of your truth, absorbed in one sole desire to send it into the men you are preaching to; and then every sail is set, and your sermon goes bravely out to sea, leaving your *self* high and dry upon the beach, where it has been holding your sermon stranded.'

Let me yet speak for a little of one consequence of this singleness of purpose whose value I have urged upon you, namely, *that you will let God choose your sphere for you, and your special work of life.* Have confidence in His providence and in the wisdom with which our Lord and Master will apportion the work among His servants, and will open the door for the exercise of every man's special gifts. Beware of those ambitions by which young men are often misled. Have you not observed how strangely a man's natural ambition often misleads him because it goes in some direction for which he has little gift. He admires most,

somehow, what is least within his reach. One young man is consumed with military ambition who has not a physique to endure toil, and must in a campaign soon be spiritless from exhaustion. Another man aims at distinction among scholars who has not in any high degree the power of amassing accurate knowledge. So too it happens that a man in the high office of the ministry mars his work by aiming for years at promotion to some other kind of congregation, or to a professor's chair—an aim on account of which he gives but a divided heart to his people, and there is a strain of argument and effort in his preaching, and a mistaken choice of topic by which it is greatly weakened. Another man, perhaps, is ambitious of distinction in debate. With little gift for business he toils at Presbyteries, his first speech in the Assembly is a great thought to him, and he is constantly endeavouring to keep himself in evidence in Church Courts and to figure in newspaper reports. How sinful this is, how mean and how lowering! How different from the atmosphere of life in which those noble servants of Christ lived whose biographies constantly stir our aspirations after things that are true, honourable, just, pure, lovely, and of good report!

You will hear a great deal just now about the haphazard character of appointments to charges, and the rarity of promotion in our Church. In my

belief, if you pay much heed to this you will look at the matter from a wholly mistaken point of view. Rather remember that in no charge, however humble, will any of you be less than a minister of Christ; it is only in money and worldly prominence that you need ever be inferior; not in labour, not in service, not in joy. And I would have each of you go into the ministry from the first as Christ's servant, in the firm belief that He will open the way for you, and use you in His own wisdom. Do not be afraid that any gift you have will be unused by Him, or that occasion will not be given you to say all you really have to say from Him and for Him. I would not forbid you to take part in the counsels of the Church, or to contribute to sacred studies. But let your principle be, *first things first*; let your heart be given to your primary duties and to those who have the first claim on you, the souls committed to you. Let everything you undertake be as you are called of God; so you will act with a certainty and a strength that are above yourself, and in course of years you will perceive, as you look back, a wisdom of choice for you that will be a sustaining secret of your life in any position. One of you may have a history like that of a recent Moderator of Assembly who had many promotions, but never sought one of them. Another of you may have a career as unexpected as that of my college contemporary, William

Macfarlane, who was the first to plant the Gospel standard on the Eastern Himalayas, and died after laying deep the foundations of the Church of Christ there. Whoever obeys implicitly the call of God will become 'great in the sight of the Lord.' 'We never mount so high,' said Oliver Cromwell, 'as when we know not whither we are going.' Notable in this view is the account of his career given by the late Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Benson) in an address to young men. Early in life he made a resolution never to apply for any post, and never to decline one to which he was called by competent judges. It is open to you to act at least in the spirit of these examples; and if still, after many years, any one of you finds himself in a small sphere, he may yet give heed to that frank word of President Garfield, 'If you are not bigger than your place, you are not big enough for it.'

To you who are entering the Christian ministry I hope I may appeal to cherish the conviction that there is nothing so high as the direct work of dealing with human souls on behalf of Christ in that ministry. I hope I have response and assent from you in saying that when I see in the newspapers that a man has resigned the ministry of Christ in order to give himself to literature or journalism, I feel that, though I cannot decide whether it has been rightly done or wrongly, it is

a descent. The late Principal Cairns, head of the United Presbyterian Church Divinity College, was offered by the patrons, when a comparatively young man, the Principalship of Edinburgh University. He declined this fine position because he could not for any lay office resign the work of the Christian ministry to which he had given himself. He declined it so quietly and unostentatiously that not even his own brothers knew he had been offered it till they read his private papers after his death. This act of his was at once a sign and a strengthening of the singleness of purpose which all men owned in his character. About another man's career of life, recently ended, something like a controversy is going on as I write—I mean that of Dr. Vaughan, late Master of the Temple and Dean of Llandaff. He several times refused the offer of a bishopric; and it is being discussed, whether with his many gifts, his scholarship, his eminent piety and power as a preacher, his elevation above party, and his proved administrative talents—whether, I say, with all these gifts, he had a right to refuse. But it is assumed in the discussion that in the office of bishop he would have done higher work for Christ and the Church, and I remember from more than thirty years back a sentence of Dr Vaughan's own which brings this into question. The sentence was in effect as follows: 'In proportion as any ministry is withdrawn from direct

contact with struggling souls and from giving them spiritual help, it loses, not gains, in dignity.' For the man who wrote thus, and who found his sermons listened to as Dr. Vaughan's were, and read as hardly any others were for many years by ministers and educated Christian people throughout Britain—for a man in the enjoyment of such a ministry of light and comfort to many thousands of his countrymen, it seems altogether consistent and right that he should decline a position in which business and administration would absorb his strength. I have often been grateful to Dr. Vaughan for his life-long testimony to the worth of our vocation, and I can think of no bishop or archbishop of the Church of England whose death would awaken such echoes in the Christian heart of our country as that of Dr. Vaughan has done.

When a man of my age looks forward into the future of the Church of Scotland—that future which he is not to see—he asks sometimes, Are there to be great men in the ministry of the generation to come? A Church can hardly keep its place without great men. Christianity can hardly be itself unless it attracts and produces great men. Are there then to be successors to that splendid roll of men of so varied Christian power which has never wholly failed us from John Knox to Norman Macleod? The answer to this question for the next generation depends largely on another. Are there in our

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Colleges men who will give themselves to Christ's service from beginning to end of their ministry with singleness of heart and in the power of the Spirit of God? Are there to be men in the parishes of our Church, *with* genius or *without* it, but not without that superiority to the world which we have been endeavouring to speak of and to illustrate? *Superiority to the world*—if the ministry of the future in our Church has that, it will have power.

Let me end this lecture by reading from the *Pilgrim's Progress* a passage in which, with the skill as of a painter who makes a noble picture with the fewest possible strokes of his pencil, John Bunyan shows us the features of a true minister of Christ.

'Christian saw the picture of a very grave person hung up against the wall; and this was the fashion of it. It had eyes lifted up to heaven; the best of books in his hand; the law of truth was written upon his lips; the *world was behind his back*: it stood as if it pleaded with men, and a crown of gold did hang over its head.'

LECTURE III

THE SERMON AND THE WORK UPON IT

IN this lecture I have undertaken to speak of the sermon and the making of the sermon. In doing so, I would start from this, which perhaps is unexpected, but which, I believe, is true and important, that a real and spiritually effective sermon comes to us from God: it is His gift and inspiration. The Christian preacher is a prophet: he speaks what God has shown him: he is a continuator under New Testament conditions of the work of those who began their messages in this fashion, 'The Word of the Lord came unto me, saying.' Let me explain what I mean, and let me set it forth as true in two particulars.

First, out of what store are you to bring your utterances as preachers? I answer, out of the store of your own spiritual and moral experience—out of the store of divine truth of which you have had direct vision and which you have in some real degree lived by, and tested, and found good to live by. This is the truth which you have made

your own, and which you are entitled to urge upon your fellow-men.

But perhaps you say, Are we not to preach what we find in the Bible, and especially in the New Testament? Is not that our great source and authority? Many years ago, Dr. Marcus Dods gave offence to not a few by saying something like this, that the Bible had not served its purpose with us till it had made us independent of itself. What he meant was this undoubted truth, that you do not know really a saving truth of Scripture till you have verified it for yourself, till you see it to be true by the quickening of your own inward sight, and know it to be good and precious by its gracious, purifying, elevating power in the experience of your own life. And not till you know Scripture truths in such a way are you able or really entitled to preach them. You may find things in the Scripture which are quite beyond your own experience and to which you have not attained. You may believe these to be true because they are in that Scripture which you have always found far to transcend your slender spiritual knowledge, and you may set these forth in your exposition of Scripture as part of its contents. But, when you preach, when you carry a message, you must be able to speak that which you know and testify that which you have seen. Only thus will your preaching ever have authority :

only thus will it ever have force. You see here (let me say in passing) how closely connected are your life and your preaching, your personality and your preaching. This in fact is the *raison d'être* of preaching, the cause why it endures from age to age, and why the printed book can never quite take its place—it conveys not merely truth, but truth with personality, truth and a man behind it (as has been said), truth to which the living testimony is attached of a man to whom God has shown it by His Spirit, and whom God moves to utter it.

Another thing is meant by the statement I started from: there is a second particular in which it is true. Each individual sermon—I mean true sermon, and especially such as marks a stage in your own progress as a preacher—will come to you from God. It will come into your mind very often in a single flash, or in one thrill of interest and of hope with which a word of Scripture affects you. A word of Scripture strikes your spirit and makes it echo as an instrument of music does when one of its chords is struck. So the idea of the sermon, the germ of it, the spiritual impression round which it all grows, and which it is wholly occupied in conveying, will thus come to you, and will come oftentimes in a moment. This need not surprise any one who knows the analogies of art in other regions. Some of you have no doubt been reading lately the *Life*

of Tennyson, and have learned that a poem often began with him from a single line or verse, a single thought with a special tone, or melody, or feeling of its own. This coming into his mind was the germ of the whole poem. What wonder then if a sermon grow out of one vivid spiritual impression, and we who believe these flashes of inward illumination to be by the Spirit of God will naturally think of a true sermon as God's gift.

And why do I make this claim and assertion in beginning to speak of the making of sermons? I do it in order that you may heed these inward illuminations, that you may welcome, cherish, obey, and study them; for so they will widen in range and clear themselves from mixture of error: and that you may in preaching from them be a real preacher, speaking truth at first hand, standing when in the pulpit on your own feet (so far at least as men are concerned), speaking a message of your own which you speak because you believe it and because God has shown it you.

Settle it in your minds, there is no vitality in preaching except it be drawn out of that inward fountain which has been opened by the Spirit of God: and the more you draw out of that fountain the fuller and clearer it will become. Of course you will study the Scriptures, which are the inexhaustible source of spiritual suggestion and the sure test of our beliefs. You will also read

sermons by the great preachers: I have been told indeed that all great preachers are themselves extensive readers of sermons: but you will read these not for borrowing but for quickening and imbibing, for the clearing of your own vision and the deepening of your own knowledge. And you will come to have in mind many passages of Scripture and sermons the reading of which put you permanently in possession of spiritual truth which you knew for yourself ever after. How great are our debts of this kind! I would for myself name with gratitude such a volume as Bushnell's *The New Life*, the ablest and freshest volume (if I must choose) in this century's preaching. I could name sermon after sermon in it whose central thought became from first reading a possession to me—that for example with the title, 'Every man's life a plan of God,' or these others, 'The dignity of human nature shown from its ruins,' 'Unconscious influence,' 'Duty not measured by our own ability,' 'The efficiency of the passive virtues.' To many other volumes and preachers of our own time I owe a similar debt, so that I might come near saying in another sense than Paul said it, 'I have nothing which I have not received.' Yet whenever you have great interest and vivid apprehension as you read, the matter becomes quickly your own. The keenness of your apprehension shows that you had yourself begun to

know this before, that the book you are reading is but drawing out and maturing what was already in yourself. But you should never preach anything because great men have said it or felt it; only because you now see it and feel it.

This—as I am endeavouring to impress on you—is the condition of vitality in preaching. It is the condition also of individuality, of freshness, of originality. Distinguish rightly originality from novelty or eccentricity. Originality, as Carlyle somewhere teaches, is much the same as sincerity. If you speak what you have verified for yourself, you will be sufficiently original; and that you preach thus at first hand is the condition also of your conscious right to speak: it is what will give you courage. I have personally great sympathy with any one of you, if in your early years as a preacher you feel quenched in presence of an audience—if, when you go into the pulpit, what you had carefully prepared seems utterly stale and commonplace—if with men before you of intellectual reputation your sermon seems to dwindle, your mind is fettered, your feeling chilled, your heart sinks within you, and you long to have finished. This may show that you are not what is called a ‘born orator.’ Yet in view of your career as a minister of Christ, I am not sure that, trying and painful as it may be, the liability to such feeling is wholly a disadvantage. I am very sure that the oratorical

gift, naturally possessed, is often a snare to a preacher and may even be his ruin. If you are affected with shyness and self-distrust that takes all force out of your utterance, your temperament has this advantage: you will be thrown more upon God, on the greatness of His truth, and on real conviction for your support in preaching. There will be no force in your preaching except that of conviction. But this force is the most efficient for all. Undoubtedly the preaching that always moves by a sympathetic impulse is that which people feel to be pressed out of a man by a faith that constrains him. 'I believed, therefore have I spoken.' 'This is true and I must speak it though with trembling lips.' The only eloquence, if by eloquence you mean power to persuade, is that of real desire to utter a truth which possesses ourselves and to lodge it in the breasts of our hearers.

It may make what we are dealing with clearer if I tell you here that after I had given this lecture once, and a short report had appeared in the newspapers, a minister of prominence in our Church wrote me in kindly remonstrance regarding what I had thus far said. Quoting from the newspaper as follows: 'The preacher's store of truth is that which he has verified for himself, and of which he has had direct vision. Not till we know Scripture truths in such a way are we really entitled to

preach them,' he went on to ask, 'Does not this not only justify but encourage men who do not know "the truth as it is in Jesus," as we and our Church hold it, to give forth in the pulpit, as they do, their own vagaries? . . . As the newspaper report of your lecture stands, I can think of nothing which a man may not preach or abstain from preaching in our pulpits and defend himself by it.' If any one should say he was preaching his own experience, my correspondent would answer that 'we have no commission or right to do so, but must expound and enforce the teaching of Scripture in its natural sense as accepted by our Church.' He said further, 'I do not know whether you would go so far as I do in what I may call the other direction, but I have no doubt that there are countless numbers in glory who got their knowledge of the truth from preachers who did not know it, but gave what they found in Scripture. I believe about the Word as about the Sacraments that the virtue is not in him that doth administer it.' This expression of mind, you will feel, demands respectful consideration; and it is due to my correspondent to acknowledge that what I have said may be open to misapprehension. I would therefore present my view of the matter in another form, and reply to his remonstrance shortly, as follows:—It is indeed true that our religion is a historical religion, that it starts from a revelation which was historically

given and which culminated in Jesus Christ, followed as He was by the apostolic men to whom His promise of the Spirit of Truth was so extraordinarily fulfilled. But it is also a religion depending on a living, divine Lord, and sustained by Him. While nothing is Christian that is without sanction in the New Testament, we still need and depend upon the living Christ to put us by His Spirit in real inward possession of the New Testament truth, and it is only as we are so put in possession of it that we can present it with authority and vitality.

We must not accept as the ideal of preaching what some words of my correspondent seem to favour, namely, that a man should go into the pulpit to say in effect, 'This is what is taught in Scripture, and embodied in the creeds of our Church. This has the authority of the Church behind it.' No doubt souls have been saved through the words of men who did not know the truth themselves. Memorable instances of this are on record. But the divine institution of Christian preaching implies a man in living communion with Christ, a fellow-worker with Him, to whom He has shown the truth, who shares with Him in affection and purpose, and speaks according to the measure of faith given him. For His followers as well as for Himself our Lord says, 'We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen.'

This difference of view which I have thought it right to make you aware of is probably very old in the history of the Church. In the second century, and in the conflict between the Catholic and Montanist parties, the idea of the former seems to have been that Christian preachers were to deliver the tradition that had been guarded and handed on by the bishops of the Church. The Montanists insisted on the continuance in the Church of the gift of prophesying, and we may agree that, cleared of exaggerations or fanaticisms, they had right in their contention.

I have been urging the reality and importance of what may be called the inspiration of a sermon, the fact that it is a divine gift. I go on now to say that this is quite consistent with great labour in the preparation of sermons. Genius never dispenses with labour; neither does the inspiration we speak of. In fact, there is no great preaching that is not the result of very great labour applied in one way or another, at one time or another. When should a minister begin his sermon for a particular Sunday? Dr. Chalmers advised young men to have two kinds of sermons constantly on hand, one for immediate use, another to be worked at for, say, a month—a sermon into which fuller thought should be put. One thing is certain, the earlier a subject is selected, the longer it has been in the mind, and the oftener the mind has come to it

freshly, the better. It may be no harm that a sermon is hurriedly written, if it has been well thought out before. The text and subject occur to you, let us suppose, together, and early in the week, or they have been in your mind for a while. When first the flash or germ came to you, you put it down in your notebook. You have had it ever since in the background of your mind, and you have added in your notebook related thoughts, illustrations, divisions, that occurred to you, putting them down in any order, numbering them perhaps to keep them separate. It is important to write; it 'keeps the mind from staggering about'; also by writing you catch a thought in the first freshness of its occurrence, when it usually clothes itself in greatest felicity of language. I take for granted too that you will write out the whole sermon; whether it is to be read or extemporised in the pulpit, it should be written. You master the subject in this way, and you master the vocabulary required in speaking of it. When the time comes for writing out, you look over your notes, which by this time have made excursions into the whole field. Now you see more certainly what should be the order of the sermon, so that it may be logical, and that its different parts may not overlap, which is a sign of confused thought; and you choose the order also with a view to what may tell best in speaking, particularly that the sermon may grow as it advances, that

there may be a progress in it, and, if possible, a heightening towards its close.

Another thing, now, you perhaps see, that for the sake of unity in the sermon—a most important feature—you must leave out many things you have noted or intended. You must not attempt to exhaust your subject, and a great deal of your skill will be in sacrificing—putting out for the sake of unity what you are doubtful of, or even what you thought fine. You will recollect the maxim in art which is as old as the Greeks, ‘How often the half is better than the whole’; or, as Tennyson puts it, ‘The artist is shown in his self-limitation.’

For the beginning of a sermon avoid that almost constant error of the inexperienced, a long introduction, starting far away from your chief topic. I said, ‘of the inexperienced’; but it is surprising how hard it is to get over this. A friend speaking to me lately of one of our foremost ministers said, ‘On a platform you must give him forty minutes. The first ten minutes the people are almost asleep, but by the end he has powerfully impressed them.’ It is a great disadvantage, however, to need so long to get begun. Avoid also, on the other hand, a high-flown rhetorical opening from which you are bound to drop; get something to arrest attention at once, to interest, at any rate, and from which your sermon can grow and mount.

In the body of your sermon should you have ‘heads’

—divisions of which the heads are announced? I sympathise with the prejudice against them in England as formal and hackneyed; an earnest, informal speech or word is the ideal to me of an ordinary sermon. But no sermon should ever be preached of which the outline or argument could not be written down easily, distinctly, and shortly. If this cannot be done, it is a confused sermon. It may still have that finest thing perhaps in any sermon, a spirit that is elevated and elevating; but it lacks much. A sermon should have not only a spirit, it should have teaching. That is where the pietists erred: with great wealth of feeling they gave little truth. We should seek in our preaching to carry the whole man with us, mind and heart both, and this implies that our sermon convey massive and abiding truth. If it is to do this it must be orderly, and I will venture to say that if you can exhibit this order by successive 'heads' distinctly announced, it will be very helpful to your discourse. This old method has much to recommend it when not carried to tiresome excess, as they did in former days. For you, indeed, in your generation, it may have the advantage of being a fresh method: it has of late been so much disused. Divisions of a discourse that form an orderly progress with heads that forcibly concentrate their meaning—this method interests; it also rests the hearers, giving them a pause in thought

now and then; it satisfies by giving a sense of mastery; and felicitous heads are long remembered. But beware of alliterative or otherwise fanciful heads, which are sometimes felt to want in seriousness, and which do often strain the truth in order to force it into their mould. Also, although you often announce heads, do not be bound to this always, or to any one type or form of sermon. Let there be that variety of form which everywhere in nature belongs to vitality and life.

In regard to the close of a sermon, should it always end with an application or an appeal of some kind? Of course this is the natural conclusion of an address which is meant to persuade; but here again in former days an application to different classes of hearers, or first to the converted and then to the unconverted, lost effect by being invariable and becoming hackneyed. We must keep in mind that ideas tell on men's conduct far more than advices, and a sermon ought all through to be so penetrated with the purpose of persuading, that an express appeal at the end may be less necessary. It should never be forced; no one should ever feel that it is there because custom requires it. Or the appeal may be in a sentence, declaring that these things concern us all, or that these things touch our life. But, on the other hand, if your teaching has been fresh or massive, it can be happily followed up by appeal. 'Praying is the end of preaching,' it

has been said, and the power of bringing the truth home to your hearers, and moving them to pray to God about it and act on it—this power, with the sympathy, love, and courage it requires, is a great test of your value as a preacher. We rarely have nowadays appeals to hearers of such power as were made in old days. The preaching of our day rarely attains to this. Part of the reason is that what has been called the *shadow* is wanting in our preaching. Without attempting here to enter on the question of eternal punishment, we must recognise that the change and hesitation of Christian opinion on this whole subject has been accompanied with a loss of intensity, by which preaching is weakened. We fail to put such meaning as there ought to be into what the Scripture calls the revelation of the ‘wrath of God’ or the ‘wrath to come.’ We hesitate to appeal to fear; forgetting how often our Lord does so, and forgetting how many of the greatest and best on the roll of Christian saints were first driven to Christ by fear—among them, I believe, even the saint to whom we owe the hymn which contains these lines:—

‘My God, I love Thee: not because
I hope for heaven thereby,
Nor yet because who love Thee not
Are lost eternally.

Not for the hope of winning heaven,
Nor of escaping hell.

But as Thyself hast loved me,
O ever-loving Lord.

So would I love Thee, dearest Lord,
And in Thy praise will sing,
Solely because Thou art my God
And my most loving King.

That was what he attained to, but he began from fear of wrath. And experience of the ministry will show this often repeated, as in the case of one of the most valued members of a congregation of the Church—so its minister lately said to me—whose Christian beginning was due to a visit to a theatre where *Faust* was being performed, and to the thoughts suggested by the scene picture of hell.

I am far from meaning that our force of appeal is to be always or even often drawn from the thought of hell, but it was Henry Ward Beecher (not the man we might have expected it from) who said truly that preaching that is wanting in shadow will want in power. If you would persuade men, you must be able to appeal to them by the tragedy as well as the glory of human life, by the depth and the height of its responsibility and of its hope. This you can only do in the fellowship of Christ, and the truly effective among you, as preachers, will be those who, in the pulpit, make real again for this age the words of St. Paul, 'We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God

did *beseech* you by us: we *pray* you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.'

Passing from these suggestions as to the beginning, the plan, and the conclusion of a sermon, returning to speak of the sermon as a whole, there is nothing I would more urge you to apply yourselves to than its adaptation to your hearers. First in importance for a sermon is that it express the Christian conviction of the preacher. Next in importance is that it be adapted in form to the mind and heart of the hearers. When sermons of good men fail, it is, in the immense majority of cases, from want of adaptation. If there is a direction in which there is room for you to make advance, great advance, on those who have preceded you, it is in this I now speak of. I would have you apply yourselves to it from the beginning of your ministry, with the assurance that there is great scope for your efforts here, and a great reward awaiting success. I would urge upon you also that want of adaptation to your hearers is not only unskilful, and the cause of most failures in preaching, but that it is really a moral fault, arising, as it does, from indolence, deference to custom, pre-occupation with one's own ideas, and want of that knowledge of our people, and sympathy with them, which is their due. Few things are more blamable than for one of us to occupy that most sacred and precious time when a parish is assembled to hear

the Word of God in argument about difficulties which nine-tenths of our people never felt, or in academic refinements, or in declamation against sins to which they are not tempted, or in rhetoric whose dictionary style hides its scantiness of meaning, while all the time the great needs of the people are unsupplied: 'The hungry sheep look up and are not fed.'

But I would have you understand well when you come to address a country audience, or the typical Church of Scotland audience anywhere, in which the great majority consists of working people, that by adaptation we do not mean condescension. You must diagnose truly the mind of the people, and you must not under-estimate their capacity in the things of which it is your business to speak. I am aware of the immense distance between the educated and the uneducated, or more exactly, between the learned and the unlearned. I know that in many respects the two move in worlds so different that they cannot communicate with one another. But have you observed that there are classes of subjects on which all men, men of culture and men without it, are on much the same level? It is so in regard to the whole field of the family affections. It is so in regard to the main events of life—birth, death, marriage, bereavement. It is so in regard generally to all actions viewed as right and wrong—the praise due to the first, the blame

due to the second. And, lastly, it is so in regard to the main truths of religion. The truths about God and Redemption do indeed surpass the full comprehension of the highest minds. But the thoughtful poor will be found to be exercised in spirit about them, and nowhere does the apprehension of plain people and educated people stand so nearly on a level as in regard to these greatest matters of all. The capacity to receive true impression in regard to God and divine things is by no means distributed according to education or 'culture' in the world's sense of the word. When you have before you a congregation entirely of labouring people, you may still think of it with reverent estimation as a field of great and fertile capacity into which you are about to cast seed for God.

Adaptation, then, is not condescension. And, as part of this truth, it does not mean that your preaching to a mixed congregation should be undoctrinal. I need hardly say I agree with the Duke of Argyll's blunt reply to Lord Spencer in the House of Peers, that undoctrinal Christianity is nonsense. If the Gospel we preach were incapable of orderly and definite intellectual statement, if it were too vague to be presented in definite forms to the understanding, it would be as a Gospel, as a revelation of God and God's dealings with us, in a poor way. It must soon perish. Man is a unity. In-

telleet, feeling, and action in him are interdependent, and if there be a belief of which intellectual account cannot be given, it is on the way to perish out of the list of human interests. The human mind will endeavour to form intellectual conceptions of what interests it: the more it is interested, the more it will seek this. And you may feel sure that if you can preach so as to give clear and assured truths about God and man and our relations to God, your people will welcome it. They will be glad to feel that they are set on strong foundations in regard to these highest matters. You will strive to adapt yourselves to them, not by omitting doctrine, but by avoiding subtleties, by being concrete rather than abstract in your form of teaching, by finding happy illustration from the world, and from that range of life with which your hearers are familiar, and, in general, by keeping in thought and speech within that wide region, in which, as I have already said, learned and unlearned are on equal footing.

In speaking of adaptation, I have just named speech—language—and here I feel especially there is room for you to make great advance on the generations of preachers before you. In this matter of style they are perhaps ahead of us in England, although there again they fall too much into the idea that to adapt we must condescend and be even childish in our topics and treatment.

But, in Scotland, I could wish that there were far more preaching that came home to the humblest, without losing in the qualities that commend it to the most cultured. It sometimes seems to me that preaching and writing of this sort hardly exists among us. Do not mistake it for vulgarity or sensationalism of style. It is of Saxon speech indeed, as the Bible is, and words of 'dictionary' style do not come thickly in it; but it is not attained by any so artificial rule as that of using only Saxon. It is, in my ideal of it, the best style of all. It is got not merely by avoiding what loads our sentences, but by studying, or rather living in the use of our best poets and writers, and by training ourselves to the instinctive use of a style of speech which goes swiftly into the apprehension of our hearers. Have any of you read a book by Miss Hopkins, *Work among Working-Men*? She was the daughter of a professor in Cambridge, and was led to attempt to recover for Christ the working-men of a large suburb of Cambridge, where as often in England these had ceased from church-going. In course of time this young lady had audiences of seven hundred working-men, and you will hardly find anywhere a book more inspiring, more real and free from cant, than that in which she tells of her work and its results. What struck me most perhaps was the effort she made in regard to her style of speech. She was already trained by educa-

tion in Shakespeare, Tennyson, and our higher literature: she added reading in Bunyan, the Puritan fathers, Spurgeon, etc.; and she set herself to know the common thoughts of the people, sitting sometimes hours beside a carpenter at his work, conversing with him, and drawing out what was in his mind. I do not know any one whose style has, more than hers, adaptation to her audience—an English audience, of course, not a Scotch one. As another stimulating example of effort of this kind, one might name the late Professor Henry Drummond, whose study of the art of ‘putting things’ had great reward in the avidity with which his books were read wherever English is spoken, nay, far beyond that, for they bore translation into many languages—Japanese, I believe, being one.

Again I urge—let the style in which you write and speak be a matter to which you apply yourselves unsparingly. If you are so made that you must be rhetorical, be it so: a man in earnest will do good in any style that corresponds to his natural bent; and a rhetorical style is justified by the example of one book in the New Testament, though only of one—the Epistle to the Hebrews. But remember that a rhetorical, even a rich style, requires great powers and great thoughts to fill it. Whenever these are absent it becomes simply ponderous. Remember also, that great powers and

great thoughts can find expression in simple speech, and I would counsel you to cultivate a style that is pure, that is lucid, that is severe in the exclusion of all ornament for ornament's sake, that is, in a single word, *swift*, and that is also strong, because always real, without affectation and without exaggeration.

I have mentioned illustrations, and I need hardly say that felicitous illustration is of great value in preaching. You must, somehow, save your sermons from being abstract: they must be concrete. Illustrations will help this. They serve such purposes as these—to make the meaning clear, to make the truth easy to grasp, to commend it to the heart, to dignify it by showing as in a glass its grandeur or its beauty. Cultivate for this your imagination: study for this our higher literature. Cultivate for it also your own observation, and draw upon your own favourite reading. I cannot promise you much help from any of the books of anecdote and illustration that are published for us preachers. Again and again I have bought such a volume and found it very rarely of service. Our happy illustrations will be our own—drawn from what dinted itself into our own mind and memory. It is asked sometimes, should we use anecdote to illustrate, or is there something beneath us in this? I answer that nothing will arrest a congregation, or cause the stillness in it of intent listening like the telling

of some authentic human incident or serious experience; something drawn from the great sources of history or the sacred region of Christian biography, and we shall not be wise if we fail to turn this to account. But the too frequent use of anecdote, or, which is perhaps the same thing, the use of hackneyed and doubtfully true anecdote, or, worse still, the egotistical recurrence of personal anecdote—all this is to be avoided. The Old Testament affords us a great store of illustration from incident and character, which has already in its place there rich moral significance, which we can draw upon without the least loss in dignity or seriousness, and can use with the confidence that what we speak of is already familiar to our hearers. But indeed all history has sacredness, and every life we read of has its turns and incidents that are morally instructive, if we can interpret them. I am inclined to go so far as to say that if we cannot find illustration for our preaching we are to blame. This shows that our preaching has not that first place in our life which it ought to have: for when it has that place it draws in its train and makes tributary to it all the knowledge and experience we have, however secular it may seem. Only one other thing let me say about illustrations: let them not usurp in your preaching a place that does not belong to them. That place is subordinate: they are servants of your teaching and of the message

you carry, and one mark of distinction between good and second-rate preaching is that in the latter the teaching is felt to have nothing in it: it serves only as an apology for introducing the illustrations: in the other the illustrations are so subordinate and so woven into the teaching, that you hardly think of them, only of the truth they minister to.

I may here say what I think on the often-discussed question whether a sermon ought to be delivered extempore, or whether it may be read. All varieties of methods in delivery may be defended by the example of great preachers. Perhaps there is now a general agreement against the method once so common in Scotland, of learning the sermon by heart and then speaking it without manuscript word for word. The tax on most memories is too painful, and the sermon still wants the freshness of extempore utterance: the man is reading word for word from the pages of memory in his brain if not from paper. Yet the preacher of highest name who survived to us when I wrote this page (Principal Caird of Glasgow) long used this method of delivery, and Dr. Guthrie—a different stamp of preacher indeed, but wonderfully pathetic and touching—did so habitually, although gifted with great readiness on the platform. One cannot lay down rules for exceptional men. But in regard to the alternative of reading or extemporising, there

is no doubt of the readier effectiveness of extempore speech when happily used. No preacher should be unable so to speak at least on occasion. You will practise first at cottage meetings or other small gatherings, and you will never, as a rule, extemporise to a large audience without writing before, so as to secure the ideas, to order them, and to have the needed vocabulary ready on your lips. And writing for extempore preaching will teach you well how to write any sermon. Extempore preaching requires, even in order that the memory may be able to carry it, truth of real substance, truth well arranged and truth vividly illustrated; it is a foe to all that is vague and wire-drawn and abstract: it compels, in fact, what we should always aim at. You will find also your greatest pleasure in extempore preaching when you are at home in it and are fully prepared: you will be brought wonderfully close to your people in it, and their minds will be thrown more open to you: you can suit your words often to what you read in their countenances, and the thoughts that come to you while you speak will often have a felicity or a trenchant force that goes beyond anything you had written. It were well, I believe, if there were more good extempore preaching in our Church. Sir Arthur Helps calls for it in the English pulpit, telling how, in the House of Commons, the moment a man reads, even to make a quotation, the attention flags. He

argues that it is not the uneducated alone that are more reached by it.

But, again, I admit that many, who have not the necessary gifts, should usually read. To preach well extempore requires nervous strength for the strain of it; it implies not too frequent preaching if it is to escape deterioration: it implies such arrangement of work as will give the preacher a somewhat restful Saturday. And, for many of us, especially when in a state of moderate health, a written sermon, if written with the audience in view during the writing of every sentence—if, that is to say, it is really extemporised on to the manuscript, and if the written sermon is so mastered that you can read it all through *at* the people,—this method has advantages: that of exact thought, for example, and that it escapes what is often really intolerable, the confused wandering, the hesitation, the multitude of words, sometimes the ineffective twaddle of the man who attempts to extemporise when he is unable or unprepared.

I would say to you, know both ways: practise both ways: try well your own gifts: find what gains the ear of your people: try one service with a written sermon: a second, when you feel more freedom with your audience, with an extempore one: and for your usual method be guided by experience and the best counsel.

In this lecture I have had in view what we

expressly call the *sermon*, which, whether in the main ethical or evangelical, practical or doctrinal, has one subject, one spiritual aim, and usually one text. There are two other kinds of preaching of which I should have liked to say a good deal, *expository* sermons, and *historical* sermons. By recourse to these you may give variety to your preaching; you may greatly interest and instruct your hearers, and you may turn to good account the stores of Biblical knowledge which you have been acquiring here. Keep in mind, however, that for success in exposition of the New Testament it is of primary necessity to have a mind and spirit in sympathy with its writers and acquainted with the experiences with which they deal. It is a great mistake to think that such exposition is a matter chiefly of grammar and dictionary. There is something indeed painful in hearing a Pauline epistle commented on by a man who stands outside of the thought and experience of Paul, who does not know what has been called 'the secret which Paul, Augustine, and Luther knew.'¹ But, undoubtedly, there is at present a considerable audience in our country for that rapid exposition which shows the connected purpose of chapters or books of Scripture. And in regard to historical preaching, I can myself testify how interesting our people find it to have the

Dr. Dale, *Life*, p. 529.

life of our Lord set stage by stage before them, or the splendid and constantly suggestive panorama of the old Testament history. In these days when the thought of our people is occupied so much with secular interests, they really need to be brought up in the history even of the New Testament. It is easy to make it fresh to many, and those who know it best do not soon weary of it. I think it is Vinet who says that if we do not teach much by narrative we are unkind to our people: for that is how God largely teaches them. 'Facts (he says) well related are instruction the most impressive, and, I might say, the most decisive; because the reader or the hearer administers instruction to himself. It is chiefly by histories that God gets possession of our heart. It is by means of histories and romances that ideas are disseminated. . . . Independently of sacred history, properly so called, preaching will find abundant materials in the history of the Church, in which the history of the Old and New Testaments finds its continuation; in the history of religion, which is as it were a history of Providence. What a field, moreover, is the history of missions and of Christian labours, and that of the persecutions.' I am glad also to have the authority of Vinet for an idea that has often occurred to me, though I have only now and then acted upon it, that a sermon might consist of the biography of a man of God. Vinet points to

the effective use Roman Catholic preachers make of the biographies of the saints in their calendar. Certainly I do not know a better way to present the Gospel which John Wesley preached than in the setting of his life.

I would conclude this lecture by urging even more expressly than I have done the great labour which the preparation of sermons deserves, and which any good success requires. I find in many young men of this generation, in different walks of life, a serious ignorance of the amount of application necessary for success. Look into the lives of all the great artists, and what toil, what constant discriminating study, what a high ideal, what a severe self-criticism! And shall we, whose calling is more expressly from Christ and for Christ than that of any—shall we be content with slackness? Shall we allow a work which gives scope as none other does for the finest qualities of intellect, imagination, heart, and will to be second-rate? Shall we, who deal continually with the highest subjects, serve Christ with what costs us little? I do not mean that you are to be always long over a sermon. Your best sermons for ordinary occasions will probably be written quickly—in one day, at a sitting or two. A sermon struck off at a heat, as it were, has a unity, a directness, and a lightness of touch that another may miss. But you must have thought well and diligently

before you began. I have a theory that the best works of poets are usually written easily. But this does not mean without labour. They are the results of years of thought which have given mastery and familiarity and ease.

Let me make two quotations. This from Dean Burgon :—

‘As soon as a man has made up his mind how he will treat a subject, he should write fast and fervently ; from his heart rather than his head. . . . Let a man beware of freezing over repeated acts of composition. While he is curiously casting about for a better phrase, he is forgetting the precise thing he wished to express. While he is pondering, another and yet another view of the subject unfolds itself, or some irrelevant thought intrudes, and leads the pen astray. In the end he grows confused and paralysed, and his sermon proves a failure. At best it can only become an accurate, perhaps a highly intellectual composition, but without ease, or fire, or freshness. The writer would gladly exchange it when he gets into the pulpit for the least pretentious sermon he ever dashed off with a moistened eye and a beating heart.’

The following is from Mr. Gladstone—he is speaking of what is ‘common to secular and to divine oratory’ :—‘This we are all agreed on, that there cannot be too much preparation, if it be of the right kind. No doubt it is the preparation

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of matter; it is the accumulation and thorough digestion of knowledge; it is the forgetfulness of personal and selfish motives; it is the careful consideration of method; it is that a man shall make himself as a man suited to speak to men, rather than that he should make himself as a machine ready to deliver to men preconceived words.' He adds, 'It is only out of the full heart and likewise out of the well-furnished mind, that good extemporaneous preaching can proceed.'

LECTURE IV

PUBLIC WORSHIP, SACRAMENTS, YOUNG COMMUNICANTS, AND MISSION WEEKS

It is impossible for me in the time at my disposal to go deeply into so great and controversial subjects as Public Worship and Sacraments. The doctrinal questions involved are indeed somewhat beyond my sphere in these lectures. But it is also impossible for me, in speaking to you of the duties before you, entirely to omit such a topic as that of the conduct of worship in church. What I shall say will of course be affected by my doctrinal convictions; but, without hiding these, or pressing them, it is fitting that I should speak from my experience as a minister, and give expression to what I have found profitable and conducive to the ends of our ministry.

Already in this word 'profitable' I have indicated my point of view. I think it justified as a right and adequate one by the teaching of St. Paul in that passage where he goes most fully into the

conduct of united worship in the Christian congregation, namely, in the fourteenth chapter of first Corinthians. In that chapter he brings everything to this test, Does it edify the church? and he supplies us with two great guiding rules or canons for our worship, the first, 'Let all things be done unto edification'; the second, a corollary from it, 'Let all things be done decently and in order.' That the word 'edification' is to be taken here in a wide sense, as including spiritual influence even upon those who are not yet Christians, appears from his contemplating the case of unbelievers present: 'If the whole church (he says) be assembled together, and all speak with tongues, and there come in men unlearned or unbelieving, will they not say that ye are mad? But if all prophesy, and there come in one unbelieving or unlearned, he is reprov'd of all, he is judg'd by all, the secrets of his heart are made manifest, and so he will fall down on his face and worship God, declaring that God is among you indeed.' The end of all that is done in the congregation—praise, prayer, preaching, reading—is assumed by St. Paul to be edification. 'What is it then, brethren? When ye come together, each hath a psalm, hath a teaching, hath a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.'

There is indeed another aspect of worship, what

we may call its God-ward aspect. We might consider it from the point of view of its pleasing and glorifying God. In this regard the great guiding word of Scripture is our Lord's saying at the well of Samaria, 'The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be His worshippers. God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth.' We learn from this memorable word that the consummate character in worship, toward which the sacred history had been a progress and education, was spirituality, that worship should come from man's spirit within, his mind at the same time being in the light of true knowledge regarding God, knowing the Father and adoring Him as a son. I might go on to urge this character of worship which alone makes it pleasing to God, that it be in spirit and truth, and I might appeal to you if it is not the testimony of history that spirituality is most naturally and usually associated with simplicity of form. But I apply myself now only to considering worship in its man-ward aspect, that of edification—an aspect, however, so truly in harmony with the other that St. Paul, in the chapter we have referred to, uses edification as his one and sufficient test according to which he would regulate the worship of the congregation. From this Pauline point of view let me now speak

to you first of public prayer—of your leading the prayers of the congregation.

Perhaps the ideal of prayers in the congregation is that they be partly liturgical and partly free. I say this without the certainty of conviction and the confidence which I might have been able to use if I had had long experience of liturgical prayer; by which, of course, I mean not merely read prayer, but prayer from a service-book which is familiar to the congregation, and in which they join by responses. I have known this only by occasional weeks or months spent out of Scotland, and therefore I cannot speak as one who has fully tested it. It does seem to have advantages, of which the greatest to my mind is that the people of the congregation get their own voices into the prayers, and may thus be more conscious of joining in them. It is not necessary for me, however, to weigh the comparative merits of liturgical and free prayer; for, as a matter of fact, the Church of which we are members has no authorised and general liturgy familiar to the people. The arguments in favour of one may, indeed, some day induce our Church to have a liturgy. I can understand the step being taken first in regard to those public intercessory prayers which we should offer daily and in which the thought and expression tend to be the same. I cannot, however, imagine our Church ever adopting any liturgy other than partial, any liturgy that

would not leave large room for free prayer. I cannot imagine our coming to have a service, even of intercession, that would leave us in the position of the Episcopal congregations in Edinburgh who met the day after the death of the Princess Alice, and who were unable to offer a word of explicit prayer in regard to an event of which every heart was full and to which devout reference was made that day in the prayers of every Church of Scotland congregation. And although from Dr. Guthrie, thirty years ago¹, to men of our day in all the Churches the sentiment in favour of a partial liturgy has grown, years must elapse, and a revolution in the habits of our people be accomplished, before such a thing is in actual use.

The choice accordingly which you have to make in the conduct of public worship is between, on the one hand, read prayers or prayers prepared verbatim to be repeated from memory, and, on the other hand, free, extempore prayer. Now, I would wish you to know that to read prayer, to lead a congregation by a read or learned prayer, is a very different thing from using a liturgy familiarly known to the congregation. Even a liturgy that is without frequent responses certainly becomes formal and cold, as one has perceived in Lutheran Churches. And when the people do not respond

¹ *Sunday Magazine* for 1870, p. 406.

—as our people do not and will not without some great change—let me assure you that read or learned prayers fail seriously, often painfully, to enlist the spirit of devotion, and to lead people into the presence of God in faith and joy. In very large churches where there is a strain upon the strength of the minister, or in assemblies where there is difficulty in having an undistracted spirit, I can understand the use of written out prayer; but only as a concession to our weakness, and with a certainty that the tide of devotion will not rise high. And you must have noticed this somewhat strange fact, that prayers and intercessions in a set form of words which, if they were part of an understood liturgy, might be devoutly joined in, when they recur in extempore prayer, convey a sense of routine, perfunctoriness, and mechanical poverty of feeling, which are most chilling to a congregation.

The truth is, our service has one great merit for which it is arranged all through—its elastic freedom and adaptability. It is capable of fresh spontaneity and close fitness to the circumstances and to the moment. The present work of the Spirit of God in the hearts of people and minister is recognised, and free scope given for that great grace. And I would venture to give it to you as a great rule to act upon, that you should secure the qualities and cultivate the advantages which are natural to our service, and be very cautious of trying

to incorporate methods or secure advantages which are incompatible with it—which another system indeed may have, but which you cannot incorporate till that system, partially at least, is authorised and understood throughout the Church. Certainly and specially I counsel you to cultivate free prayer; not only because a professedly extempore prayer should be extempore if it is not to have a certain unreal show about it, but because it is that in which the height natural to our service is reached. I do not deny that a young and inexperienced man may begin with prayers more or less fully studied and learned till he can get over the restraint and the self-consciousness which dry up the spring of free prayer and make it difficult for him to commit himself to the prompting of the Spirit in full communion with God. Nor do I forget that, even after much experience, meditation on the congregation and its needs or circumstances goes well before leading it in prayer. A friend of mine has long been wont to give some time of every Saturday evening to this. Even an outline of prayer thought of before, leading thoughts for its course, may prepare us for going into the pulpit, were it only by keeping us in less temptation to anxiety and leaving us more free to give ourselves to the leading of the Spirit. But, I pray you, have in remembrance St. Jude's description of Christian prayer—'Praying in the Holy Ghost.' This may indeed be attained in liturgical

fixed prayer; but I venture to say it is most naturally and completely realised in free prayer, when a man prays as is suggested by the believing sense of now having for himself and for the congregation access to the Father, through Jesus Christ, in the Spirit. It is this kind of prayer in which the heart is most really and consciously opened to God, in which the great privilege of communion with God is most directly used and enjoyed, in which the man himself most feels, and those with him most feel, that he is really speaking to God. And it is this kind of prayer which has the most powerful effect in spreading through a congregation the awe and joy of the Divine presence, and of drawing the hearts of the people upwards by spiritual contagion.

I ask you then to make sure that you attain early to conducting thus the chief prayers in the congregation. I cannot withhold from you my strong conviction that, whatever may be the comparative merits of a liturgy that is allowed, widely known, long used, largely responsive—a thing which we have not and cannot expect soon to have—there is no comparison between devout free prayer and read prayers, or prayers learned by heart. These last may be seemly, comprehensive, and free from gross faults; but for bringing souls into the presence of God together, and for high spiritual aspiration, they are far behind true extempore prayer: I

counsel you in this also to make full proof of your ministry.

I know the difficulties and the occasional failures. There will be times when your own spirit is dull. There will be times when the presence of even a single person whom you know to be critical of the *form* of worship will put you in a wrong spiritual attitude and mar your singleness of mind by making you also think of the form—that is to say, making you look at your prayer from the outside while you are offering it. There will be temptations from the thought of human blame or praise such as Matthew Arnold speaks of with a surprising insight :—

‘The soul, mounting higher
To God comes no nigher ;
But the arch-fiend Pride
Mounts at her side,
Foiling her high emprise,
Sealing her eagle eyes,
And when she fain would soar
Makes idols to adore,
Changing the pure emotion
Of her high devotion
To a skin-deep sense
Of her own eloquence.’

These are temptations to be overcome in attaining a very high thing, access to God for yourself and your people with liberty, with deep peace, with a consciousness of human need and divine supply, which on some occasions will rise so high that you marvel at it yourself. Some of the best and most

sacred memories of our work belong to such times of united prayer in which we were borne forward on a tide of the Divine Spirit.

Let me repeat my advice in this form: Do not make that confusion between free and liturgical prayer which demands the same merits in both. Do not strain after securing in an extempore prayer merits which belong to the other and are only compatible with it. Accept the fact that in a liturgy you may have a perfection of form, a felicity of expression, a short concinnity, which cannot be maintained throughout an extempore prayer. In extempore prayer you must be content to be simple in word and form. Do not attempt a symmetry that is rarely attainable, nor try to include too much in any one prayer; for in this way you will overtax your spirit, which cannot at the same time be keenly sensitive to the whole circle of truth. Yet also avoid even more, and be on your guard against, those faults of free prayer which are at the opposite pole of danger from imitation of liturgies. Beware of being eloquent in prayer. An eloquent prayer, or a striking prayer, or even a prayer in too perfectly antithetical language has an element in it that is undevotional. Beware also of mere gush of sentiment in prayer, or of that offensive egotism which sometimes disfigures the prayers especially of men who have attained to personal prominence and popularity. You will avoid these errors by being

above all things real, by worshipping in spirit and truth. Reverence for God's presence and the sense of what He is will make your language simple, childlike, tasteful, and with the dignity in it of true humility. In a word, the style of your prayers you will have little need to study if you pray truly, humbly, reverently, thankfully, in the Spirit, and if your preparation beforehand be rather of yourself than of your words. Perhaps, indeed, I should say only of yourself and not of your words; for the exercise of memory to recall what was prepared often distracts and deprives of that full sensibility to divine truth and freedom in committing oneself to the promptings of the Spirit, which are the secret of true extempore prayer.

In regard to the order of topics in prayer, and in regard to the service generally, keep, cherish, and use the elasticity which is a great merit and advantage of our existing system. If we ought to have a partial liturgy, let us set about convincing the Church¹ and getting our people to respond

¹ Although not here fully entering into the question of having or not having a liturgy in our Church, I would urge that those who advocate this need not be suspected of a ritualistic or sacerdotal aim. The extreme sacerdotal tendency is to keep the service entirely to the clergy with perhaps a choir, and to make the congregation only spectators, as in the mediæval Church. A liturgy may be desired for the opposite purpose of giving a greater share in the worship to the congregation. (See *The Christian Pastor*, by W. Gladden, D.D., pp. 154-5.) As *against* the introduction of a liturgy an opinion of interest may be quoted. A brother of Bishop Phillips

heartily—a serious enough task—but do not let us suffer our actual form of service to be marred by imposing upon it rules drawn from wholly liturgical services, and prompted by admiration of these. A committee of the Church, some years ago, spent a great deal of labour in drawing up an outline order for worship, and some members of the committee, in their desire for uniformity, seemed to me to be unaware of the value of elasticity in our services, which are some of them for ‘West End’ congregations, some for mining, fishing, artisan, or rural districts. And in the Euchologion—whose merits I own as a first step towards a liturgy, not, of course, as a model of extempore prayer, which I do not suppose it is meant to be—in the Euchologion I observe that in all the forms of service this is given as the invariable order for prayer in church after opening words of invocation—first, confession, then supplication; and in the second prayer, first, intercession, after that thanksgiving. Dr. Milligan, whose name will carry special weight perhaps with those responsible for the Euchologion, declares that the first thought which the Church associates with Him in whom she stands is praise.¹ ‘Nothing strikes one sooner (he says) in the old service-books

Brooks, on being told by a minister of our Church that we were inclining to the use of a partial liturgy, answered, ‘You will do well to think twice before carrying that out. *We* find that it kills the faculty of free prayer.’

¹ *The Ascension of our Lord*, p. 302.

than the absence of confessions, except on special days and seasons of repentance. . . . The service of the Church was almost exclusively joyous.' For my part I would go thus far: I would venture to think that, when a congregation meets on the Lord's day, the most natural first thing in its devotion will very often be thanksgiving. Anyhow, let us value and use our freedom.¹

Passing from the prayers in Church, and touching on the reading of the Scriptures, I may say that friends of mine in the Church of England think we miss much for want of a Lectionary, which would carry us through the Bible yearly. I believe we may do much to increase the effectiveness of this part of the service by choosing our portions with thoughtful care, and avoiding the narrow range of choice into which men fall who do not give the matter thought. From some pulpits the Old Testament used to be little read except in the Psalms and Isaiah. For the manner of reading, lessons in elocution may make us aware of unconscious faults, and do us good service by helping to rid us of these, and also by guiding us in regard to the use of the voice. But very impressive reading of Scripture, reading like that by Maurice, of which so many have told,

¹ It was, I believe, Bucer, Peter Martyr, and Calvin who advised Cranmer to begin Public Worship with confession. Hence the order of the Church of England, which originally began with the Lord's Prayer.

‘the most earnest and holiest reading,’ Tennyson said, ‘he had ever heard’—this is out of reach of mere art and training: it can be approached only by deep, devout apprehension of the meaning. I have one special idea in connection with the ‘Lessons’ which I may put before you. I assume that if you have two services on Sunday, your sermons will be of different types, one a sermon proper, the other perhaps expository or historical. But if your people depend chiefly on one full service at mid-day, as is often the case in the country, you may gain their ear happily and do them great good by frequently giving a very short exposition of one of the ‘Lessons.’ It must never be mere undigested talk: but if you can give in a few pregnant sentences a glimpse of the argument in a chapter of an epistle—which may sometimes come best before you read it—or if you can mention some modern parallel to the history and its lesson, you will often give a fresh interest and point to the reading of the Bible in church that will charm many of your hearers, making them increasingly aware of the wealth of Scripture. Whereas, if you only read, to how little depth the plough of their thought and apprehension may oftentimes go as it glides over the familiar words and phrases.

Another thing I have found go well with this, or take its place well—a five-minutes’ address after one of the ‘Lessons’ to children and young people.

Here you will speak in informal extempore fashion with anecdote or similitude, but well prepared, so that it may be given shortly and vividly. You may in this way not only reach the children but awaken interest in dull minds; and I have been encouraged in following this practice by visitors telling me that it had a happy effect in breaking the formality of a service, establishing a feeling of reality and kindness, so that if it is a read sermon that comes after, it is listened to better from the ear of the congregation having been already opened. I commend this to you as an example of that elasticity of our service which I pray you to turn to account in ways perhaps of your own.

In regard to the praise and music of the congregation, there has been in recent years so much discussion that I shall content myself with passing on to you a criticism by the present Bishop of Winchester, whose father I remember as an elder of our Church, and who has, I believe, a kindly feeling towards us. After absence of some years from Scotland he thought our service had lost something of its grave dignity from the rarer use of the Psalms in praise.

May I say one word more in regard to our service—a word about the blessing at the end? Think well what it is to bless in the name of the Lord: what a grand thing this is if done in faith by the man who utters the words, his heart taking

hold on God's great goodness and faithfulness as he speaks them, and if responded to with a true Amen in the souls of his fellow-worshippers. Take heed never to do your part in this formally or with that rhetorical mouthing, or any other mannerism, which is a sure mark of formality. Seek to do it with such reality of faith that there may be power in your blessing, and that whether you call your congregation's attention to their part in it or not, they may fulfil their part indeed.

I pass now from ordinary Public Worship to speak of the Sacraments. I could wish sometimes that our Church provided a form for the chief parts of the baptismal service. Especially I allow that parents have a right to know beforehand what they will be called upon to declare and promise before God and man. But I despair of a form with the Church's authority being soon provided, as there is far from full agreement throughout the Church about baptism, as to what it means, what good we get by it, and why we baptize little children. And our congregations so largely ignore it after their children receive it, that even the devout among them might often be 'Baptists' in creed so far as their practical use of it is concerned. I commend the subject therefore to your earnest and early study; but as I am speaking now of form and order of worship, I would make a suggestion in regard to baptisms when you have them in

presence of the congregation. I assume that you will have such baptisms. Although in some country districts they have become almost unknown, the people readily allow that baptism is most fitly administered in the congregation, and some parents, especially of the middle classes, will agree, in spite of shrinking from publicity, to bring their children to church. My suggestion is to have the baptismal service before, not after, the sermon. How often a baptism coming as an appendix to a sermon is thereby lowered in importance, and at the same time drives the sermon out of mind. Both are hurt. But if you have it first, you can choose your Scripture for it; you can say something profitable to the congregation regarding their part in the ordinance, and declare the faith you have regarding baptism. The Sacrament will have its due importance, taken thus early in the service, and the people will be free to give heed to the sermon.

In regard to private baptisms, watch earnestly that you do not drop into performing them mechanically. Direct the parents beforehand, so that a little congregation shall be present and take part, in which, however, are not included children so young that they would be sure to interrupt and distract, and endeavour so to speak yourself, stirring up your own soul and your own faith, that Christ our Lord may be manifested in that house, and

that His wonderful mind toward little children may be freshly realised. What words of His are these, 'Whoso shall receive one such little child in My Name receiveth Me'—'I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven!' And that act of His, 'He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them and blessed them,' how precious and inspiring this is when we realise that He is still the same and has promised to be present with us when we baptize into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost (see Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). Speak, not to the father alone, but to all present, with such freedom, simplicity, and faith, that the occasion may be indeed a coming of Christ into that house, that the hopefulness with which the parents go on in the upbringing of their child may be greatly increased through assured faith of its belonging to Him, and that the child may imbibe this happy faith from them with its first beginnings of understanding.

Going next to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, I have space only to say a word about its frequency. In regard to this Sacrament, again, you must study well and gain a personal conviction. If you believe it to be *the* opportunity of receiving the divine life, of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ whereby we have eternal life—if, I say, you believe it to be *the* occasion for receiving

this, or if you believe that the grace conveyed in it is higher in kind than that through the ministry of the Word and through prayer in the name of Christ, then you will, of course, desire to have this ordinance very often, that your people may not be deprived or stinted of the divine gift of life. If, however, you believe (as I do) that 'the Word' may be a channel of grace as true and high as the Sacrament; if you believe what seems implied in our Lord's saying, 'The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life'; if you believe that the Sacrament is, to use Augustine's expression, a 'visible word' of Christ our Lord, and a covenant act of those who partake together, an opportunity of receiving the life of God into the soul of man, but not the only opportunity, then you will seek to have the Lord's Supper with a frequency that is ruled simply with a view to edification, and according to the circumstances and spiritual state of the congregation. In a congregation very largely devout there may be a desire for frequency which you will have regard to. But in an ordinary country congregation, you will not at once reject or scorn the old Scottish custom of more rare Communion. In a Scottish country parish it is a fine thing that the Communion Sunday is a high day of the year, a day looked forward to, a day prepared for by arrangement of the households beforehand, a day signalled by special solemnity. It is a most happy thing that

the commemoration of our Lord's death and the sacramental partaking of His body and blood should thus stand forth in eminence, the congregation assembling with greater fulness and greater reverence with this in view. Understand, however, that if you entirely depart from the older fashion and have the Communion, let us say monthly, the day and the service will fall from this eminence, the attendance at Communion will be very sparse, the preparation will be less, and the whole occasion will become commoner. Even though your aim be to set the Sacrament higher than the preaching, it will in reality be sunk seriously below it. My counsel is that you have it as often as is consistent with maintaining a high reverence for it: and perhaps you will find that a quarterly communion is as frequent as will be wise.

From the Lord's Supper I go to speak of the constantly recurring work of preparing young people for their first communion. This, I need hardly say, is one of the best opportunities of your ministry, one to which you will apply yourselves with your whole heart, with your best wisdom, and with such prayer as will keep you in the counsel of Christ while you deal with these young souls. They come to you at a most susceptible time of life, when their natural religious instincts can be easily appealed to and the capacity of godly choice is not wasted in them. They come also, in almost

every case, feeling that they are taking the most serious step they have ever taken in their lives. Be sure that beneath all shyness and all fear of betraying that they are poor scholars, this feeling exists, and you have scope for all your tact, brotherliness, Christian seriousness, and Christian hopefulness, in conversing with them, discovering them to themselves, setting before them a Christian life, and encouraging them really to apply themselves to it.

You will form a class, but, before you teach them together, you will arrange so as to see each of them privately. A private conversation should come first, and will also come well at the end of their preparation.

What will be your aim in such a first conversation? You will seek to find out where they are in knowledge of the Gospel, and in belief of it, what their mind is toward the Saviour, and where they stand in religious habit. You will try to make distinct to them what it really is to be a Christian. You will make them aware of the responsibility of the inward choice they make at this time of their life, that it would be wrong to come to the Lord's Table without coming to Christ Himself: but you will so speak of Him and of a true Christian life, as to encourage them to choose that life and to feel sure that it is within their reach.

It is a great beginning if you can succeed in getting them to tell you with some frankness what

their thoughts are. Keeping in mind their natural shyness, you may ask at first questions about our Lord's life and death so simple that they get to be at ease with you. Then you may ask, 'Are you wishing to be on the Lord's side in the world?' 'How long have you been thinking of coming to the Communion?' 'What made you think of it?' 'Have you ever in your life been very anxious about your salvation?' 'What put this into your mind?' Find if you can the sacred point in their horizon, the quarter from which real religious impression has at any time come. It will perhaps be something they have heard in church, or something they have read in the Bible, or it may be a relative, or a companion who is devoutly Christian and whom they would wish to be like. Seldom does God leave any one without some such witness. Some ministers succeed by speaking first of their baptism, that in their childhood they belonged to Christ, that their very body was to be a temple of the Holy Ghost. Have they allowed what was Christ's to be defiled? Do they now desire to receive His grace and to be true members of His flock? In regard to their Christian habit you may begin by asking them to say the Lord's Prayer. Often they will stammer and err in it: this may lead to inquiry about their prayers and what their custom has been. Here you will find great differences. Prayer with many has become an utter blank, and when you pray with

them you find that to kneel down is something new to them. With others again there is kept up only their childhood's prayer, or, as a young blacksmith I remember told me, the habit of saying before going to sleep—

‘O may we stand before the Lamb
When earth and seas are fled,
And hear the Judge pronounce our name
With blessings on our head !’

With others again there is a good Christian habit ; and you may be startled as I was when I asked a lad, mentally somewhat deficient, what prayer he said at night, by his repeating with great simplicity one which his devout mother had evidently taught him, a prayer in expression and in length not unlike our first prayer in public worship. Deal, as I have said, in very brotherly manner with them : show yourself ready to hear anything that is the real fact. And remember it is a great step when a young man has owned that he has not been so mindful of his prayers as he should have been, when he feels as he talks with you that he has made very little use of prayer in his life.

I think it is a good rule to follow in the difficult work of individual dealing with souls—whether before Communion or at other times, as when there is a religious movement in the district—I think it is a good rule to begin by saying what God is already saying to them in their consciences. Con-

firm and deepen that. If, for example, the person you speak with is feeling sin deeply, or is alarmed about it, beware of too hastily speaking peace. Only along the path in which God is leading them will they come to the light. This does not always mean that you are to confirm what they say. Their real feeling they may be hiding by what they say. Nicodemus was perhaps hiding his inward trouble of spirit when he put before our Lord that piece of reasoning, 'We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him.' Our Lord's reply was directed to what was deeper in Nicodemus. 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'

Interviews with young communicants, let me say again, are great opportunities. How gratefully many of them will feel towards you for meeting their own serious thoughts at the time, understanding them, deepening them, and showing truly the great demands Christ makes upon them, but also His great grace—His redemption, His helps, His promises. Young people out of devout families, they and their parents, will usually value much your serious and truthful dealing. Even in families of little religion you may find exceptionally susceptible young people. And, I pray you, resolve that none shall pass through your hands at that stage

without knowing for the rest of their lives that Christian faith and Christian life are realities, and knowing what these realities are. When after a first interview you form a class, you may find a few of them so far above the others in knowledge, or so far below them, that you should teach these separately. But, in this case, bring them all together in the end. Let the confession of Christ they are making be avowed to one another. Let there be no admission to the Communion by side entrance. Of course they are all presented to the Kirk-Session and admitted to the Communion Roll by them. Their names also should be read to the congregation (this at least), and you may then say a serious word to the congregation about their duty to such young people.

In regard to the lessons for the class, almost every minister follows a course of his own. For the more inward and spiritual side of the instruction I use a little book of my own, and I may read you the titles of the six lessons or chapters of it. (1) On confession of sin : (2) On renewal of heart. The aim of these two is to prompt and guide in opening the mind to God, which is the most critical and central part of the preparation, the part which they will be most tempted to make slightly. (3) On fears about the future : (4) On confession of Christ before men : (5) On prayer : (6) A plain talk about the Lord's Supper : (7) (After Communion)

On the service of Christ. Perhaps the chapter on prayer should have come last; for, while opening the mind to God is the great spiritual beginning, keeping it open to God is the great security for continuance and growth in the divine life.

In addition to this I try to secure that they all know the story of our Lord's life and the main truths about Him. And in the slender knowledge and dulness of apprehension which we often have to meet, I am prepared to defend, even to recommend, my use of the *Peep of Day* as a text-book for the average young people of farms, beginning at the twelfth lesson and appointing a dozen lessons to be prepared for next meeting, on which I examine by the questions at the end of the book. You may smile at this; but it is a test to me of a country minister, and whether he has really gauged the minds of the average young people about him that he should understand it. At this stage of their Christian course it is important to have a book which requires no intellectual effort, in using which you can keep their thoughts freely directed upon the great religious facts. And you will find that those who are dull minded, or much in arrear of knowledge, are greatly encouraged in using so simple a book by finding that they can answer you easily. One or two hymns may well be learned at this time, and you should take care in your course of instruction that they thoroughly understand the passage

in 1 Cor. xi. 17-34, and know what to 'eat and drink judgment' means, and what it does not mean. It is not enough to correct the word 'damnation' and say it should be 'judgment.' They still understand by this the very same thing: they take it to mean eternal judgment. It is always difficult to displace an error: much more difficult than to teach a truth from the beginning. But we must see that they take in the truth that what St. Paul warns of is judgment in this life, 'chastening of the Lord,' something which He mercifully sends to save from eternal judgment. 'For when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.'

I have left myself but little space in which to speak of the last topic named in the list for to-day, viz., Mission Weeks. The value of these is now fully recognised by the General Assembly; several of our ministers are known as well able to conduct them, and one minister has been loosed from his parish for six months of the year for this work. The aim of a Mission Week is 'to startle the careless, to make the thoughtless think; to vitalise formal profession into spiritual religion'; to bring to decision souls that have long been only intending and hesitating; to bring others into the new joy and strength which Gospel blessings produce when we know that we have them, and finally, 'to stir up real Christians into more self-denying activity

and a closer communion with God.' I think I can assure you that a Mission Week may have effect in all these directions, and to such a degree as to become a landmark in the spiritual history of a neighbourhood. The first Mission Week in my parish was indeed in very favourable circumstances. A religious movement was going on throughout Scotland which drew such attention that everywhere it was spoken of; in remotest villages you would hear the novel and characteristic music of the movement, and the subject of salvation was in all minds to a degree beyond my experience at any other time. With all that, however, a Mission Week in our neighbourhood was an entire novelty. It drew attention not the less as being held in a parish church. All ranks and all denominations in the parish attended and helped, and in the fine evenings of that month of May people arriving on foot or in conveyances from the whole district round quietly passed into the church to listen to the new voice of the preacher with solemn intentness. Many stayed for his after-addresses, in which he taught them and guided them toward immediate spiritual action. In spite of the exceeding shrinking of country people from observation, a number came to him for personal advice. Individuals were known to me who thankfully counted their life's Christian decision and Christian light from that time. For years afterwards I was constantly coming

upon instances of impression made or benefit got in that week. Young people especially coming to be admitted to Communion would tell me of being first concerned about their salvation then. Other effects it had. From that time the idea passed away that the minister went up into the pulpit merely to acquit himself well; and those who helped in the music and arrangements of the time long remembered with pleasure their fellowship in that work.

Do I then urge it upon you to have a Mission Week in your parish? Do I say that you must have such a thing? I do not venture to say this. You must take most serious inward counsel before you decide to have a Mission Week. It is a great responsibility, and it would be far better never to have one than to have it without 'counting the cost,' without fit preparation, or without some true confidence of God's being with you in having it. It requires on your part nothing less, I think I may say, than a fresh surrender of yourself to Him, and a fresh emptying of yourself, that He may sustain you and use what you do. It needs a mind in you fully made up and a preparation of your people for months before, in which you expound all through your parish what you aim at—for, as Bishop Thorold says in papers on parochial Missions, which were of guidance to me: 'Of all weaknesses, the weakest is that of showing any false shame about

it, and of keeping it in the background as if we were not perfectly sure whether it were a good thing. Of all the evils that can befall it, the evil of least consequence is its being disliked or criticised.' Another serious responsibility you incur is that of carrying on the work after the Mission preacher leaves, and following up impressions made. You must take all this into account. There should be a unity in a ministry; it should not be a succession of hot fits and cold fits. Even when you decide to have such an effort, the time for it must be carefully chosen. If you discover among your people some spiritual susceptibility, it may decide you. Or some movement in the neighbourhood may create an atmosphere and afford an occasion. Or you may feel that your own ordinary teaching has made way in your people's hearts, and gives you reason to hope that a Mission Week may be a reaping time of what you have sown. In all types of earnest Christianity such seasons of general thought given to religion have been a valued part of Christian method. The many services of Fast-days before our Communion in former generations are an example. Some good men are afraid of excitement in religion. But why should we not aim at having an intense interest about religion in a community? Excitement is indeed wrong and hurtful if it is not turned into immediate spiritual action. But it may be so turned, and then it is

like a high tide at a harbour mouth, by which vessels may be carried over a difficult bar. From beginning to end a Mission Week needs most real thought, prayer, judgment, and self-surrender. But when these are given, it is usually worth them all, and remains green and sacred in the memory as you look back on your ministry.

LECTURE V

VISITING

I AM to endeavour in this lecture to speak as well as I can of your visiting your people as their pastor. Perhaps there is no title of our office more seriously suggestive of its duties than that of *pastor*. *Clergyman* and *minister*—like the German *Pfarrer*—are words that now serve as mere official designations of our office ; but *pastor*, more rarely used in Scotland, still suggests the great duty of watching over the flock, and caring for them individually. The pastor will visit his people, and, if I may judge of you by my own recollections as a student of divinity, this duty of visiting is the one you feel least prepared for, and in view of which you are most conscious of your inexperience. Perhaps it is therefore a duty you shrink from. There is no doubt of its difficulty—that it taxes a man and his gifts to the utmost. Many men shrink from it on account of their natural temperament. I have known of a parish minister who said, ‘I dislike visiting so much that I never allow myself to stop

it.' I will venture to say that the man who so spoke, if he pressed on under a sense of duty, came by and by to like his visiting. But many, to their great blame, do allow themselves to be very slack in it, or to visit to little profit. I shall apply myself to speak of a minister's visiting in plain detail, to take you, as it were, into the thick of it, hoping that in this way I may be of some service to you, even although I shall be reminded in doing so of my own shortcomings in the work, and must ask you to take what I say with the admission on my part that there are men in the Church who visit and deal with individual souls with a tact, with a resource, and at a level of spiritual helpfulness which I can only admire.

I would call your attention at starting to the free and welcome access which we ministers have to the houses of working people, and especially of country people, throughout Scotland. That the doors readily open to us, that there is an understanding favourable to us before we say a word, that our visits are desired, often longed for—this, which we inherit from the past of our country, has often seemed to me a talent of great price, to be traded with diligently for our Master.

In regard to general visitation from house to house—this will be a first duty in your parish, and one to be kept up systematically. It is not merely a requirement of custom. It is of great value in

making a personal link between you and your people which, in the case of working people especially, is needful for the acceptance and the influence of your preaching. It commends your preaching, and prepares them to receive it as from one whom they know—from their own minister. It is, besides, the fact that many families when they first arrive in your parish will require a visit from you to renew in them with promptitude the habit of church attendance. And you may have in mind this other important moral effect, as I may call it, of promptly visiting people; it gives them the sense of being of value; it is a stimulus to labouring people when we can save them, as in this way we can, from thinking themselves of no account—a thought that is often morbidly present with them—or from sinking under this every way lowering fancy, ‘No man careth for my soul.’

It used to be, and indeed still is in many cases, the habit for a minister in visiting to conduct a short service in every house, reading the Scriptures and praying. You may do so; intimating from the pulpit the day and hour when you may be expected at a place. The family will then be prepared for you, the house perhaps tidied up, and the goodwife not caught, as she dislikes to be, in disorder. But visits of this kind are apt to become formal; the people are, as it were, for the time ‘in church.’ At your first entry into your

parish I may advise you not to fall into the error, as I did, of beginning with a visitation in this fashion which requires a great length of time. Your people will be all hoping to see you very soon. Do not disappoint them; let your first round of your parish be rapid—to make acquaintance, and to discover cases and circumstances requiring special attention. Have a ‘visiting book’ with you in which to enter the names, the Church membership, the children’s ages, etc. You can get these without seeming to be official and inquisitorial. They will understand that you have come to make acquaintance, and would like to remember all the names. Ministers are often advised to visit in the evening so as to find the men at home. In my experience it suits very well although on the first occasion I see only the house-mistress and children. A two-handed talk is more easy for both parties, and I am often told on such occasions spiritual facts of the family in a somewhat confidential way which I should be less likely to hear in a full gathering of the household; then at a future call I may see the husband or sons. The small population of my parish allows this double visit. In going round your parish take care not to overlook servants, lodgers, or young men in bothies. Few things will bring better return in the way of influence and stimulus to good than this. You will find many among them of susceptible nature,

your intercourse with whom may leave a mark for good that will last their whole lives. We are indeed much to blame when we overlook such people.

What will be your thought and manner in visiting a family, say, for the first time? I answer, You will cross the threshold with reverence, were it for this reason only, that you can little foresee what may be the issues of your acquaintance with this household, or on what solemn errands you may come to their door. I have often been struck in looking back on my intercourse with a family, to remember my first visit to them, and how little I anticipated then what we were to be to one another. I think it is Edward Irving who, in a famous ordination address of his, says, 'Be the minister always.' If this means that you are to speak always and only on religious subjects, or to give a religious turn to every conversation, that you are in fact to behave as if you visited in a cassock—which, I believe, is becoming common in England—then I by no means agree. Irving himself probably followed our Lord's instruction to the letter, 'Into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house.' We could not do what Irving did; nor perhaps should we if we could. We shall not get near our people if we walk in with a conventional solemnity, and keep our conversation always official and religious. The young especially will avoid us, and the consequence of our visit in many cases will be that people will

pay us back in our own coin ; they will answer us with religious commonplaces ; our intercourse will be unreal and unprofitable ; [we shall have come together not for the better but for the worse.

There is another extreme, however, to be equally avoided, in which the minister comes as a friendly gossip, so that they say of him, 'We wouldn't have known that he was a minister'; or he seeks to ingratiate himself by jokes and jollities, a method sure of success after its kind in those households, but in those only, whose low moral and religious level has made them rather dread hitherto a minister's visit.

If I do not say with Irving, 'Be the minister always,' I would say, 'Be the man and the Christian always.' Be natural and human (as we express it), not unready for any real human interest. Be genial: never let there be a shade of social assumption. Let it be your high aim to be the same man in houses of all classes, the friend on equal level of people of very different ranks. Be a good listener. Give sympathetic heed to anything told of family trial. Direct your inquiries so that things of importance in the family history may come out. Some days you will find yourself much more tactful than others: there will be something in your mood and presence that inclines people to confide in you and unburden themselves to you. And you may be able to help them to see what

they tell of in the light of God. Anyhow you have helped them if they feel that they have shared their trouble with a friend, in whose keeping their secrets are absolutely safe and reverently thought about. If on the other hand as you listen you are plied with insinuations against the character of neighbours, or oily compliments to yourself, or other objectionable matter, you will put this aside in a way that will mark it as unwelcome. As regards real, direct conversation about their spiritual state, seek to be ready for any door that is opened, and if your people come to know you as having an inner gravity of spirit, and a desire for their salvation, they will now and then long to speak with you, though with a struggle against great shrinking and shyness. Watch therefore for any door that is opened : but do not force the door open. I have indeed known a minister who resolved to go round his parish and to ask directly in every house whether they had peace with God. I can believe that this very aggressive method would stir thought about salvation. But many would feel a somewhat just resentment at being treated with this mechanical uniformity in regard to matters of the greatest delicacy. Be cautious, I would still say, of forcing the door open. You will in this way no doubt often leave a house with a feeling that you have done no good. You may incline to grieve over the time and strength spent in

visits which have been simply calls. But these serve at least the purpose of making the people feel that they are not overlooked: the personal link to them is strengthened: they will be more ready to welcome you in time of trouble if they have known you before as a friend: and my experience is that you will almost never visit a row of cottages without some incident coming to your knowledge, or some family concern disclosing itself, which has made your visit in one house at least very opportune: you may feel it indeed to have been providential, that you were *sent* there that day.

How often should we make these general visitations? This depends, of course, on the population of your parish. Some of my neighbours make them twice a year. In my smaller population I visit carefully after the yearly term all new comers, and afterwards keep up visits at farms, etc., at intervals of not many weeks: but I find it needs vigilance to avoid overlooking isolated people. We must know our whole parish: we must feel that we can give account of every family, of their character, and of any existing points of interest, requirement, or opportunity.

Passing now from general visitation—from that regular visiting which depends for its frequency on the population of the parish—we come to visiting of a more urgent kind, visiting that is called for by providential events. I have said

more than once, Do not force the door open : one reason for saying this is that the door will be opened by God Himself. Where there is special grief ; where there is special joy ; where there is bereavement ; where there is sickness—all these are sacred already by the presence and working of God, and we should reverently put ourselves in the way of being used as His messengers. It will be important for us to know early of all serious events. In country places it seems almost impossible to get people to send for a minister as they do for a doctor. But you will soon be understood by your people to be eager to hear of such. Not the elders only but many sympathetic people will be ready to tell you. Esteem it a high thing in your profession that you are looked to, that you are expected, and that you are welcome in the solemn crises of life, that people who can hardly see any one will usually see their minister. Esteem it a great thing that by being an early visitor you express the sympathy of the Church, but especially that you come in the name of God, helping those whom He is dealing with to have faith in Him, to pour out their hearts to Him, to undertake the duty He is calling them to, or gain the blessing He designs for them.

At a little congress of ministers (or 'retreat') for prayer and conference which I joined in many years ago, one of them said that our duty in

cases of trial was to interpret: to open out the divine meaning of the trials. Since then I have seen this to be oftenest too high for us. We should hardly venture on explanation, going no further than suggesting possible purposes of God. Not explanation but faith—to stimulate faith, to stay the mind on God in faith—is our great purpose in coming where God is dealing: to be His witnesses, and especially to witness of Him that through all He is love.

Perhaps I should go now at once to speak expressly of visiting the sick. I have no doubt you will feel this a very serious duty. You are in excellent health, have never perhaps had experience of severe illness, and when called to a sick-bed—still more to a death-bed—you feel very much at a loss. You do not know how to adapt yourself to the mind of one suffering greatly, and you are hampered besides by the presence and expectation of friends of the sick person. Nothing but experience and the habit of depending on God can make you a skilful and successful physician of souls at such times. First let me say: Be watchful of your own heart, and see that in visiting a sick person you go with a right motive. Beware of falling into visiting case after case *in order to get through your sick-list*—reading Scripture and offering prayer with each to satisfy expectation. This will indeed often satisfy friends

of the sick—people who think that a minister should come and pour out a stream of good talk, and then the requirements of religion have been decently met. You will strive to go on behalf of God for the spiritual good and divine consolation of the soul He is dealing with: you will therefore lift up your heart to God as you go. In many cases you will offer deliberate prayer about the case before you go, putting yourself under God's guidance, linking yourself to the Lord in what you are doing and obtaining a deepened sympathy with the sick person and his friends. Remember that real sympathy, in which we enter into the position of the sufferer—a position strangely new to him, perhaps, one in which he seems strangely far from the world he has hitherto lived in—real sympathy with him is a great call on our powers. Dr. Vaughan somewhere speaks of real sympathy as so difficult that if we truly enter into the case of one sorely tried person in a day, it is about as much as we are able for.

When you go into the sick-room keep in mind the bodily sensibilities that are exaggerated by suffering. Enter gently, but decisively: do not whisper: avoid awkwardnesses which try the patient's weakened nerves: for example, do not stand uneasily; get seated where he can easily see and hear. In speaking be quiet, but distinct. You may inquire enough about the illness to put

yourself in felt sympathy. Be short in what you either say or read from Scripture, short also in prayer, although, of course, the length will depend on what each patient is able for, or shows inclination for. In sore sickness you must be very short, very concentrated, and have at command gracious and assuring words of Scripture. In sore sickness indeed you must sometimes be content to go without reading, perhaps even without prayer, or pray with the friends in another room, and come again.

You will seldom err in a first visit in making it your aim that you and the patient both (for it is wise to take yourself in) should enter into the great truth of faith, that this which has befallen is of God—not by chance, but of God—and not without some actual thought and purpose in God's mind toward the man who is afflicted. You will quote or read from Scripture passages which convey this as only Scripture words can, for example, 'Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father: ye are of more value than many sparrows.' And while you let the solemn thought of God's being near, and dealing with the man, sink into his mind—while you allow this thought to stir in him, as it may, regretful feelings, memories of sin or neglect—you will speak with assurance that God's purpose is a gracious one, and that the suffering is for good. You will try to stir the gladness below all fears which comes of believing that He

who is over all is goodness itself: you will suggest thankfulness for the sufferer's having the clear use of his mind: thankfulness that we may come to God in prayer, that God will hear, that we may tell Him all that is in our heart, and that He can right all that is wrong in us. Although your own hope and wish may be, from what you know of the sick person, that he may repent of sin, the aspect of God which you present will be chiefly—not entirely but chiefly—that of His goodness and grace: for by this the man is most likely to give up fleeing from God and to be moved to betake himself to Him. When you have succeeded to this extent that the man inclines to open his mind to God, when you see that he welcomes the prayer you offer, not as a mere decent formality, but as a help to him in pouring out his heart about his trial and about his soul, then you have already made a great beginning. Read such a Scripture as that in Heb. xii. 5, 6, 'My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.' Help him to realise his position by speaking of his illness as a special Sabbath of his life: or read of the Lord Jesus preparing a man for blessing by 'taking him aside from the multitude.' Perhaps you may quote to him such a maxim as this, that God never takes away one good, except

in order to give a better. You may have some incident to tell as an instance of gain by affliction : if it be a young person you are dealing with, you may bring to mind some of the many great servants of God who began through an early illness to apprehend what God would make of them. Before you pray with a sick person you may remind him of such a text as this, 'Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he will sustain thee.'

Can we give any general plan, you may ask, of the region of divine consolation into which you are if possible to introduce sufferers, a plan by which you might guide yourself in continuing your visits? The consolations of God are manifold, and that is a great title—'the God of *all* consolation.' Every great truth of the Christian Revelation has consoling power when by the working of God's Spirit it fills and expands the soul. But I think we may say that consolation gathers itself round that name of God, 'The Father.' If we are to name one word in which it is summed up, that is the word. If we can help the sufferer to say 'Father' as Jesus said it, and as thousands of Christian people now do, he will find in this great wealth and depth of consolation. We shall therefore seek to speak of God ourselves with faith as our Father, and try to remove the hindrances, mostly of sin and love of the world, which come between the sick man and this great assurance and source of comfort.

While writing this I have been at the bedside of a young man who has suffered long from abscesses and is now very weak. In my immediately preceding visit I had told him a story which interested him, and now I found him more able to listen and perhaps more inclined. I was led to speak of the great amount of suffering in the world, and to say that we could not have known certainly that God cared for us, had it not been for Jesus who knew God, and who, all through His earthly life and sufferings, looked up to God as His Father, and spoke of the same God to us as 'Our heavenly Father.' 'My Father (He said) and your Father: my God and your God.' I told of Jesus even on the cross saying, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' As I spoke in this manner the young man looked at me with a more wistful interest in his eyes than I had yet seen in them.

In many cases this would have been enough—I mean, one truth for a visit, especially if you have been enabled to speak of it with fulness of heart yourself. But I felt that the young man listened for more. And I felt that this was one of those times which come now and then in a series of visits, when the separating barrier between our personalities is greatly removed, when we meet in a medium of human feeling and thoughtfulness common to both—a medium which is probably the direct work of the Spirit of God, and along

which communications can pass from one soul to another as, somehow, they cannot in ordinary moods. So I went on to say more to the young man. And I will tell you on what principle I said a few words more. Though it is right to begin with God and His goodness—God the Father—we cannot overlook that sin works an alienation in the heart, or a fear which haunts the conscience and makes the soul exclude itself from that goodness. The better the promises we quote, the more the heart, conscious of its sin, will hear these promises with doubt of having any share in them. ‘A need of expiation is felt though not distinctly perceived.’¹ I therefore spoke to the young man of the blood of Christ by which we sinners are brought nigh to God,—are brought near as Jesus was, and can say to God, Father, as He said it. Nothing hinders, nothing comes between us and God but sin, and ‘the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.’ It is surprising how sometimes such a message of Christ and His blood liberates the filial spirit in a man, puts him in possession of God as his God, and enables him to say ‘Our Father which art in heaven’ as he has never done before.

Or again, the evil that haunts the conscience and thrusts the soul from God may be a secret consciousness of rebellion against His will—perhaps

¹ Vinet, *Homiletics*, p. 244.

about the illness, perhaps about some plan and hope of the world. If this seem to be so, we may call to mind the prayer of Jesus, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: yet nevertheless not my will but thine be done.' We shall try to bear witness of the hundredfold gain in God and our Lord Jesus that is received through giving up anything of the world for Him. Worldliness is the great enemy in our hearts to divine consolation. It is when we overcome the world that our peace is as a river.

So then, in the country of divine consolation into which we seek to bring the sick whom we visit, the great landmark of truth is that God is and is the Father. Our aim may be to bring to the Father, and our method to remove hindrances of unbelief, of guilty memory, of worldly self will.

The great truths of God and of Redemption, which we use with those who are spiritually ignorant, are also those out of which true Christian people will draw deepest comfort. All our life we need to be learning afresh and believing more deeply God's presence in our life, His gracious purposes, His love in Christ.

Our Lord Jesus Himself, His fellowship in suffering, His sympathy in temptation, His promises, His shepherd care, life and immortality brought to light by Him—these are an inexhaustible store from which to minister to Christian souls, and we shall discover by so ministering

that He is able to make them perfectly happy in Himself though they have nothing else in the world.

In conversing with people in difficulty or in doubt, do not think it necessary or greatly to be aimed at, that you should win a dialectical victory in replying to argument or objection. Many books tell us stories of very ready reply and of convincing epigram with which an unbeliever or doubter has been met. But do not be led to think that only in this way you can do good. The greatest help you can give is usually by your sympathetic apprehension and the contagion of your faith—a faith you hold by in spite of difficulties which perhaps you are unable to remove.

In regard to apparatus for visiting the sick, the great book of course is the Bible. We are not called to go through a service in each sick-room like that in the Church of England Book of Common Prayer. The clergy of that Church do not themselves use it much, I believe. We are left free to adapt our procedure to the case and the hour. But the reading of a relevant portion of Scripture—a very short portion it may be—is in most cases of immense value. No book bears like the Scripture to be read in these short portions: new meaning comes out of them marvellously in serious circumstances: the holy and venerable words convey assurance even when flesh and heart fail. You will find suitable portions gathered in a

book¹ by Dr. Cameron Lees of our own Church, by Bishop Walsham How, in his book *Pastor in Parochia*, and elsewhere. You may do well to begin putting together such a book for your own use. But you will do best if you can turn readily to portions of Scripture which have become memorable to yourself, or from which you have been recently and freshly taught. Excellent use may also be made of hymns, or single verses of hymns, especially if we find any that have been already felt by the sick person to be fine or illuminating. I think it would be a good addition to our literature for the sick-room if we had a small collection of hymns, in good print, each hymn accompanied by narratives of the guidance into God's presence or of the comfort of God of which it has been the means—in fact, a book not wholly unlike Mr. Stead's *Hymns that have Helped*. This would carry people in trial over the depression that comes of thinking that there is something quite peculiar in their temptation. It would be a sign to them, that the same afflictions are accomplished in their brethren who are in the world, and it would also make them more sure of the way of deliverance because other people had found and used it. But recollect that with very old people, in many districts of Scotland, hymns are unfamiliar: the paraphrases and psalms are more welcome to them.

¹ *An Order for the Visitation of the Sick*. Blackwoods.

In regard to prayer with the sick, that is of course the crown and goal of your visit. If anywhere you seek to pray in the Spirit it will be at a bedside. It is a happy thing for us that we are accustomed to use extempore prayer, prayer that belongs to the moment, for and with one soul. No doubt an English Collect long familiar and loved may be helpfully used with a devout person of that Church: but I thought it significant to read that Mrs. Oliphant on her death-bed wished much for a Scotch minister, for one who could pray with her, as she said, straight from the heart. You may expect wonderful results from prayer: even from the sense that the sick person and you have been together at the feet of God and have been seen by Him as you are. Let your prayer be real in every word and tone. So it has not only power with God but great power in guiding the sick man's thoughts. You can say in prayer what you could not say directly to him. The mistaken course his thoughts are taking you may correct in prayer. If, for example, you see that he is self-righteous, that he is staying himself, as so many do, on some poor idea of his honesty, or his long church attendance, or even his early religious lessons, you may do great good by going with him humbly into God's holy presence, and offering a trembling prayer in view of God's judgment of our poor lives: you may even, with some reserve, name sins which you know

he ought to confess: and you may help him by your own fellowship to seek the peace that comes only by faith in God's redeeming grace in Christ. In prayer, too, you may bring into view the alternative of death being near, and you may so speak of it in prayer as to be helpful to the man, when a direct announcement of danger might be too disturbing to his mind and therefore spiritually hurtful.

I have said nothing of diagnosis—that discovery you will make or judgment you will form in your mind regarding the spiritual state of the sick person, and on which you will seek to act in your converse with him and in prayer. There are, of course, such different classes as these: the devout, the anxious, the desponding, the self-righteous, the indifferent. And it is a great matter to know something of the previous history of a patient and to get indications of his present mind. A hindrance to this is often the presence of others in the sick-room. People are restrained from saying anything frankly about their inward need or their deeper feelings even by the presence of their nearest kin. It is almost always a gain to see a sick person now and then alone. And you may obtain this sometimes without marked awkwardness by saying to the friend who comes to the door as you are leaving after one visit, that you would like the next time to see the patient alone. But even this must

be done with consideration of the people: some would take alarm and would fail to understand. You must be prepared for very difficult and discouraging experiences in sick-rooms. You will find some men armed against spiritual thought and against death itself by an astonishing insensibility, due to long exclusive occupation with material interests. You will find again, that some snatch of stoical thought, or of fatalism, or some maxim of self-righteousness, holds the citadel of the mind so that you cannot dislodge it. It will be necessary for you sometimes to use great plainness of speech. With the truthfulness of love we must sometimes appeal to fear: 'knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men.' Perhaps the most perplexing cases are those of complete reserve and silence. Our working people are naturally reticent, and often the weight of illness makes converse of a spiritual kind a great effort to any one. It is well if we can have more or less free conversation: it is well if we can get the person even to suggest something we might ask in prayer. Yet we must not feel baffled by silence or any obstacle, so long as we have such weapons as the Word of God and prayer. I can never forget a breaking of silence, which startled me in my early ministry, by a man who had been for a while reserved and unresponsive. Guided partly by what I knew of his history, I had read with him the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke—the

story of the Prodigal Son. Some time after, as I read and spoke about God's receiving sinners, he interrupted me, his whole face lighting up, and said with an effort and an emphasis not to be forgotten — 'Yes, and there's joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.' This man was drinking in the full joy of that great encouragement; I learned the power of it from him. He died soon after, and it was a great encouragement to me at that time of my ministry to be told by a lady some things he had said to her of what my visits had been to him.

In cases of recovery from sickness it will be our care to confirm the man in the belief that his recovery is of God's goodness to him: that it is God's gift: and we shall seek to move him to say with his whole heart, 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? I will pay my vows unto the Lord; yea, in the presence of all his people.' We shall endeavour that the man may feel impelled by gratitude to a new life, and that he may tremble lest his affliction turn out in vain, the blessing of it lost. It is of course the fact that we shall sometimes be astonished how quickly the resolutions and promises of a sick-bed are forgotten. In general, an intention to live better, to live a better life, is entirely useless; it is an evasion of what the man is really called to. If

he is a man who has been liable to one special sin, of the flesh or of the spirit, his vows and purposes in recovery may be directed towards overcoming that *by the help of God*, in fellowship with Christ. But if the resolution is in a general form, it should be not merely to live better, but to live the new life, the life in Christ. Anything below this is sure to be temporary, as it is less than God calls to. And along with this it will be well if a man takes a new attitude before his neighbours: 'I will pay my vows unto the Lord; *yea in the presence of all his people.*'

I have recollections of devout people hindered by sickness for a length of time from coming to the Lord's Supper who felt that no earthly privilege would have been so great as to eat and drink again at His table with His people. Now that a Communion service in a sick-room is permitted by our Church, you will sometimes find that such people would wish it and value it. You may let them know your willingness to have it if they desire it: and you can arrange that it be joined in by a few whose fellowship will be helpful; also perhaps that an elder go with you. But do not be surprised if some truly devout people show no great wish for it. They have been accustomed to a full gathering of the congregation for the Lord's Supper, and to all the gravity of the services accompanying it, and they hardly feel that it would be a Sacrament to

have a short service in their own room. No doubt this idea will soon pass away, and the promise of Christ, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them,' will be felt to raise a private Communion to the full height of privilege and blessing.

In regard to visiting cases of infectious illness, I may in a single sentence say that while a minister will obey the usual rules of prudence, he and his family will take the risks of his profession as doctors do.

I have now gone rapidly over the ground in regard to visiting the sick, and have said perhaps enough to give your minds a start on the subject from which they may begin to work. That is all that any lectures or any book instruction can do. Experience will far more be your teacher in this matter. An eminent doctor said, 'No practitioner worth calling to the bedside was ever produced by book work merely. A man so trained would not merely be useless, he would be positively dangerous.' This is largely true of one who is called to the bedside to minister to the soul. Yet neither will experience do everything. All your life, if you apply yourself as you should to the duties and opportunities of which we have been speaking, you will deeply feel that you must lift up your heart in words like these which Bishop Walsham How suggests for prayer on the way

to the house of sickness: 'O good Shepherd, be with me in this my work! Strengthen me in my weakness. . . . Let not my sins and infirmities hinder Thy grace. Grant me faithfulness with tenderness, and boldness with meekness. Comfort me that I may comfort. Suggest and bless that which I shall speak in Thy Name.'

I who in this lecture have taken in hand to speak of visiting the sick, have had occasion while writing it to visit two daughters of a friend both seriously ill, and I felt driven to depend on God as much as if it were my first visit to a sick person. Nowhere is success more out of reach of our own powers. Sometimes it will surprise us, coming beyond all expectation; sometimes it will quite fail to appear. How great success may be given, and how wonderfully Christian faith, tact, and perseverance do avail, you may learn by reading such a book as that six-penny one, entitled *Modern Miracles*, by a lady of great culture and spiritual courage. Narratives like hers revive our hope and are worth our study. Her book thoroughly deserves its name. As an aid to dealing with cases of spiritual anxiety in health, as well as in sickness, I may name *The Difficulties of the Soul*, by Mr. Hay Aitken, who speaks with the authority of great experience as an evangelist.

May I say yet, be prompt in visiting the sick, making as little delay as possible. Opportunities

pass so: deaths so often take us by surprise: this at least has been my experience. I have been counting on time for many visits, and there was time only for few or one. And it is most painful when an opportunity or duty has been entirely missed. Years ago a message came to my door on a Sunday morning asking me to come and see the father of a parishioner. The message did not sound urgent; so I went on with my pulpit preparation, intending to visit in the afternoon. I was not very well at the time: for that reason perhaps I waited till after my early dinner; then went to the house about the middle of the afternoon. I found the old man had just died. He had longed to see me; it was he who got them to take a message: again and again he had asked if I were coming, and they had gone out to look up the road to see. He was clear in mind till within a few minutes before I reached the house. How painful a memory that was to me for long, how much I felt I had lost, and how much I felt I was to blame, you can guess. I recall it still, painful as it is, that it may sustain my advice to you to be prompt to use first opportunities, and that it may help to spare you similar grief.

I am well aware that I have done no more than make a little beginning with you on this duty, which concerns itself with the most serious times of human life. Perhaps one service of some value may be

done by what I have said, the service of making you aware that there are no rules by which visits can be successfully made, no secrets that can be passed on, only the secret of throwing oneself into the duty with all the faith and sympathy we are capable of. I have already taken an illustration from the medical profession, and I would now take another. From what I have myself seen, and also from what I have read of life in foreign malarious regions like one of our mission fields, I would divide doctors into two classes. There is one kind of man who pays the proper number of visits, goes through the regular treatment, commits no error, and whose patients sometimes recover, but in serious cases they seem to 'slip through his fingers.' There is another kind of man, who in a serious case applies himself to it as to a battle he has to fight with all the resource of his being, who, as it were, *will not let his patient die*. I need not say which of those men we should imitate in our spiritual treatment. Especially we should give ourselves with our whole soul and with absolute unreserve to minister to the dying. When death approaches, it is a time for tenderness, for self-control, for care not to speak too much, and to speak only from a full heart: but it is no time for any fettered self-consciousness, no time for minding who else is present, no time for the ordinary polite reserves. Great text of Scripture, or great gospel word, frank, personal

testimony to Christ, short, fervent prayer, or verse of holy hymn—forget yourself in using these; wholly give yourself up to helping and guiding your dying brother or sister.

As I have been trying to take you with me into the actual experience of the work you look forward to in visiting, I may tell you the issue in the three cases which I touched upon as examples in this lecture, and with which I was occupied when I wrote it. All the three young people of whom I told passed away soon. To the first, little more than a child, I was not conscious of being of any distinct help. It was not thought wise to tell her that her end was so near: that is sometimes wise, sometimes not. But one day she said to her mother, 'I am not *dangerously* ill, am I, mother?' 'Yes, dear,' said her mother, 'we must not hide that from you.' She was much surprised, as she had felt better, and by and by she said, 'And is there no hope of my getting well again?' Her mother gently told her that they could not, humanly speaking, look for that now. The girl was silent for a little; then she said, 'But isn't it true, mother, that "The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness: and do immediately pass into glory: and their bodies being still united to Christ do rest in their graves till the resurrection?"' Her mother answered, 'Yes, that is true.' The girl showed entire contentment,

arranged her little matters, telling who should get the things she valued, said farewell to all her family, and passed away next morning. To her sister I believe I was of help. One day she was too weak for me to do more than repeat a text and these lines which I like myself:—

‘With cheerful steps the path of duty run :
God never does nor suffers to be done,
But what you would yourself, could you but see
The end of all events as well as He.’

These lines gave her great pleasure. I had to write them down for her another day: she sent them to friends: and I believe they helped to lighten for her the way through the valley of the shadow.

The ploughman's son suffered a good deal; but his close of life was with hope. Often in the last night through which he lived he spoke with anticipation of the place prepared for him in the Father's house, referring to words I had been conversing with him about. He gave earnest counsels to his younger brothers, parted in very loving manner from his whole family, and indeed this was one of those events in which we see to what dignity and worth a humble home may attain through Christian faith and family affection.

LECTURE VI

ON ORGANISATION IN COUNTRY PARISHES, AND ON THE MINISTER'S LIFE IN ITS GENERAL RELATIONS

ONE of the reasons why organisation is more needed in congregations, and therefore more valued nowadays, is that our people have now a greater variety of interests and greater freedom to pursue these interests. Many things claim attention from them—politics, general news, recreations, entertainments—and, being happily less burdened with labour and better off than they were, they are freer to give their mind to these things. Consequently, even in a country parish, there is a danger of the life of the people during the week flowing on almost entirely uninfluenced by the Church or the ministry, sometimes under influences which are hostile to them. It is well then if the ministry can extend itself—can come into contact with this life, and guide it or affect it, at many points. It is well if the minister can find helpers, can associate them with himself and with one another, and can assign to them spheres of work for which they are

fitted. Plainly in this way much more work may be done. Sir Arthur Helps tells of a great administrator, who had ruled over one of the first departments of the State with much credit, and who was heard to say (as the secret of his success), 'I never do anything myself.' And the gift of so enlisting and using others is one of a high moral quality. The man who has it is almost sure to be a man free of conceit, free of fussy insistence on his own way—a man who is generous to others, and who loves the excellence of other men.

It is besides a great means of grace for Christian people to have work which they do expressly for the Lord and His Church. With all devout souls it is instinctive to do good for Christ's sake: they lose spiritually if they do not obey the instinct or if they do not have scope for it, and in general the more they do the more they are blessed in their deed. It is therefore a minister's duty to find work for them if he can: it would be his duty even if the work did not cry to be done. He should seek to interest his whole congregation in the work of Christ going on in the world now, which in many of its features is as divine and as profitable to hear of as what has been recorded in the Book of the Acts, and he should aim that all may have some part in Christ's work, as many as possible a definite sphere of their own. He may sometimes enlist even the sick or aged who are

devout to pray for the workers. In discussing why the Church of England is (or *was* when she wrote) less successful than the Wesleyans in gaining and keeping working-men, Miss Hopkins gives it as her opinion that it is because the Wesleyans entrust them with work, whereas in the Church of England they do not find themselves of any particular use. If we observe how much trouble our best working-men will take for the friendly society of which they are members or office-bearers—if we observe how their interest in the society, their affection for it, and their sense of the good it does, grow with the trouble they take, we shall see how important it is to enlist them similarly for the greatest of all friendly societies—for that friendly society for which a man might count it worth his while even to die.

One step in organisation is in our Church compulsory, in town and country. There must be a kirk-session. When a kirk-session has to be made or added to, it is customary to consult the congregation; and, when the members of it are seriously appealed to, they can be trusted very generally to choose the men whose character and weight with their neighbours best fit them for office. One duty only of the kirk-session let me speak of, that of Church discipline, and especially of dealing with members of the congregation who have brought public dishonour on their Christian profession. It

has long been customary in our Scottish churches that these should be excluded from the Lord's Table till they have appeared before the kirk-session and made such acknowledgment of their transgression as satisfies the session of their penitence. They are then, after being suitably addressed by the minister, 'absolved' and readmitted to Communion. I understand that there is at present an inclination on the part of many to substitute for this a private remonstrance by the minister, or to let the whole custom die out. I should greatly regret this. From my experience as a minister I should think that the Church was giving up a great means of good. It is in human nature often to think lightly of sin if the voice of the community is silent about it. If the Church fails to 'judge' the sin articulately, and after condemning it to readmit the penitent to its communion, two great evils will follow. The sense of the sinfulness of the transgression will be much weakened, and the transgressor will not have the great blessing and impulse to better life in future which the restoration to membership and brotherly acceptance is capable of giving. And in such dealing as is required, while it is fit and needful that the minister should converse privately with those who are in error, the exclusion from communion, and the restoration to it should not be the act of one man only. He should have the

support of brethren, men of Christian character, such as elders of a church may well be. Of course there is great room here for tact as well as seriousness. The occasion is not one for mere rebuke, still less for mere scolding. The great purpose in view is restoration; to wound only in order to heal, to humble only in order to raise up. The man who will do this best is the man who most truly feels himself a sinner and seeks to act in Christ's name and spirit. Prudence may often suggest, if the session be a large one, that the duty be delegated to a few of the most spiritually minded of the members. But if it is done faithfully yet tenderly, in a word, Christianly, the effects on character are most happy: there is often sincere gratitude felt on the part of those dealt with, and the whole community gains morally. Not only would I greatly regret the entire abandonment of this duty in our Church: considering the manner in which this is sometimes urged, I should have the painful feeling that our Church was acknowledging that it had not enough of the Spirit of Christ in it to use the commission He has given His Church—a commission which by His presence He would enable it in good measure to fulfil—‘Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven’: ‘Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them; and

whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.' Can we find these words of Jesus in the Gospels, believe them to be genuine, and give them no place in the practical administration of the Church?

In regard to carrying organisation further, this can be done in many directions in town congregations wherever there is considerable spiritual life, and it is now understood to be a valuable talent for a town minister that he be a good organiser. But I should like to make you aware that there is considerable scope for this even in the country. There is a considerable choice of enterprises and organisations which may be found practicable and beneficial in a country parish. Of course you will need Sunday School teachers. Often a parish requires several schools in it at different places: and it is a happy thing if you can find people of sufficient gift and character to carry the main responsibility of these and who can give to them, or to a Bible Class of their own, their chief spiritual interest. A branch of the Church of Scotland Woman's Guild may be worked even in a very thinly peopled parish, and besides its ordinary scope, the intercessory prayer at its meetings may become of value for all the spiritual work of the parish. A branch of the Young Men's Guild is often difficult to work well: but this is also possible, especially if you aim not so much at many meetings as at a few

of a high spirit and level: and even for a good deal of trouble you will feel yourself well repaid when, years afterwards, you hear from some man prospering in London or far away in India, that he has an ideal memory of the Guild meetings. For both guilds we get great help from the annual Conferences. A lad sent to a Conference as a delegate returns with his heart on fire from the frank fellowship and the Christian enthusiasm of young men whom he has met and heard and admired. After that experience he has more belief probably both in Christianity and in the Church of which he is a member.

Another possible organisation is some form of Missionary Association, or at least, a body of distributors of the quarterly mission paper. The missionary is the spear-point of steel with which the Church thrusts against the powers of heathenism: but the force of the thrust depends also on the wooden shaft. What I mean is that, though the missionary is in the post of honour, he needs to be sustained by the Church at home, and the more closely you who remain at home are linked to those of your number who go abroad, the better will it be for both. A missionary interest is of great value for the life of a congregation in this country, and when that interest is so cultivated that the congregation has an actual share in the work of the missionary, there is a fulfilment of the

promise of Christ, 'He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward'; or, as we may translate it, 'He that receiveth a missionary because he is a missionary of Christ shall receive a missionary's reward.'

In the way of organisation, you may have also a Temperance Society: or if, in the district, drinking is so rare that it is difficult to make the *raison d'être* of such a society felt, you may have a Band of Hope, in order to send your young people into town life forewarned and forearmed. The church music is a field in which many may give very valuable help. A Parish Library will be found of great service: often you will do well to be your own colporteur. And still another thing—you may find that with the help of parishioners gifted in that way you can provide and guide to a considerable extent in the matter of recreations—whether games in summer, or lectures, readings, concerts in winter. You may find that you can thus occupy to advantage the ground of your people's leisure and keep it from what is lowering.

I have named all these things as possible in a country parish. But I have not said that any of them must be, and I would warn you from the beginning against over-organising, against setting agoing more than you can by yourself, and by good available help, keep going;—particularly against starting anything that is to depend on help with-

out first seeing that it is in the line of the gifts of the available helpers. I am, I trust, as loyal as most men to the Committees of the Church, but I still say that you are not to start a guild of any kind merely because it is strongly urged on you, and you are not to start entertainments and athletics merely because that kind of thing has anywhere a certain vogue. Have before your eyes for warning the melancholy state of matters when a minister finds himself kept constantly on the trudge and in the worry of keeping things going—things which are out of proportion to his sphere or not natural to it. In the Church of England many of the best men, burdened with the keeping up of schools, and in other ways expected to do more than we are in parish business and parish charities, groan under the amount of serving of tables which they have to do. One of them says, ‘The multiplication of religious secularities is killing the preaching power of the English clergy. The constant complaint of both the elder and younger clergy is, “I have so many things to do that I cannot have my mornings for reading and thought in my study; nor are my afternoons at leisure for parochial visiting.” The result is that congregations often know the exact length of the sermon but forget the text; can criticise the preacher’s manner, while entirely ignorant of the matter of his discourse. . . .’

‘The parson bewildered by the proof sheets of

his Parish Magazine, and obliged, towards Christmas, to arrange entertainments, and to sit up half the night compiling his sheet almanack for the New Year, begins to wonder whether he is really ordained to preach the Gospel, or whether he is merely a church business man.' Accordingly, let me counsel you to organise cautiously. Let your preaching and main spiritual duties have by far the first place. Choose for helpers those especially—I might say those alone—who will do the work, not for your sake only but for duty's sake, for the Lord's sake, and from interest in human good. These you will find, to some extent, men and women, even in the most neglected parish, and only such can you depend upon who have a spring of impulse in themselves. Choose also, and arrange with a view to this, that you may allow the work committed to any Church member to be that member's own. It is a great principle that if we would have people interested as helpers, we must give them room, scope for their individuality, and, indeed, power. You will be at the head: the best helpers will the most constantly give you that place: but it is your part to let them feel that they are trusted with work of their own, and that, as far as is at all prudent, you let them do it according to their own ways. What a blessing to the Church of Scotland those Guilds and Missionary Associations have been in establishing a multitude of new inde-

pendent centres of impulse—all workers with a gift and a sphere of their own tending to become such.

My general counsel then is—do not start what you cannot keep going: do not get the reputation of rushing into schemes that have vogue and dropping them soon. But count it a duty and a great gain to associate with you in your work good men and women: follow the line of available gift, and allow each worker scope and a sphere so far as you can. But still remember that they require your frequent recognition and help, and along with this that revived sense of the sacredness of their work that comes best by prayer with them.

In this concluding lecture—in this my last opportunity of addressing you—I would wish to say a few things in regard to a minister's private life and in regard to his more general relations to society.

In speaking of his private life I ought obviously to begin by speaking about his prayers—his habit in regard to prayer. In Adolphe Monod's *Farewell to his Friends and to the Church*, there is a chapter on 'Regrets of a Dying Man,' and this is one of them: that he had missed so much through his shortcoming in the use of prayer. What Monod felt very many of us feel as we advance in life, and I give it you as my most sincere counsel that early

in life you acquire and establish a good habit of prayer—good in regard to its recurrence, in regard to the room given to it, and the full reality with which it is used ; that it be vigilant in its self-scrutiny, that it go over your whole practical life, that it include and fertilise your study and reading, and that it be believing in its intercession. You will find no more immediate gain than from prayer along with your studies and preparations, and from prayer of intercession for people whose spiritual state interests you. It is astonishing how much light comes into the mind by prayer, how knots of difficulty are resolved by it, how practical wisdom for affairs comes by it, and how the great assurance of God's being with us returns through its means. Never let any social prayer, least of all your family worship with your household, become formal. It is melancholy to think of those family prayers which are hurried, mechanical, and readily omitted for some small reason. I pray you, turn them all to account for the highest ends, and they will become a daily spring of life. Let me suggest to you to do what in a country parish is not too cumbersome, namely, to keep your own Communion Roll, and every now and then to turn over its pages and take on you, as you do this, the burden of the neglects that are brought to your mind as you look at the names, of the unsatisfactory church-memberships, of the strifes among your people, of the sins into

which some have fallen, and to carry that burden in intercession to the Lord's feet, with thanksgiving also for good brought to mind in this way. As a general rule about the amount of prayer, let it be enough to keep your work so before our Lord and Master, that you may carry with you the sense that He is in partnership with you in it and privy to what you are doing. May you be among the number of those fortunate ministers approved of God who receive direct and notable answers to their prayers, answers of guidance or answers of divine working, such as I have heard told of in memorable manner by ministers of our own Church, such as are also told of by (among others) Dr. Büchsel in his charming book *Reminiscences from the Life of a Country Minister*, which I have made, in some respects, a pattern for my addresses to you.¹

I thought I had finished what I was to say about prayer, and indeed I had said what I meant to say: but the words come to my mind, 'God giveth the increase,' and the fact comes to my mind that in the view of the Apostles all that was done by them was done by the Lord working with them. It occurs to me that, if we saw the matter in the same light, prayer would have a wholly new emphasis. In all I have said it seems to me that I have made prayer serve by raising the value of our work. Perhaps

¹ First vol., translated, with title *My Ministerial Experiences*, Strahan and Co.

its place is more central still : it the primary, and our work the secondary and instrumental.

I should like next to say a little to you on *study*. You will not expect me to demand that you should exhibit learning or learned argument in the pulpit. A show of learning is indeed rather a characteristic of men who have little of it. And I have no high respect for a ministry in which study of some department of Biblical science, or of antiquarian science, is first, and 'the cure of souls' second. But in an age of so intense mental activity in every direction as ours, it will be very hurtful to us and to our influence to be slack as students. Your studies here bear on your future work almost as the studies of earlier sessions at college bear on those of later, and to have studied slackly here will put you often in later life in something like the position of a student in Natural Philosophy who has neglected his mathematics before entering that class. Books will every now and then appear and influence the generation which you will not be able to apprehend or judge. In fact, you will not keep pace with your age. And however busy we are at college, we dare not suspend our studies when we leave it, or even when we have been long at work as preachers and are pressed by the multifarious calls and engagements of our profession. A man who is a true preacher must be a man—cannot help being a man, who has a keen doctrinal and Biblical interest all

his life, his mind more and more clearing itself as to the truths he believes, and as to the expression in which they may be clothed. What a vast field and of how varied interest is now that of Biblical study! What questions are in course of solution! And if we do any single portion of Scripture the justice of thorough systematic study, even though there seem tracts of barren detail to go through, yet by and by what wealth it has contributed to our thoughts! If a man is to have the strength of unity in himself, his intellect and his heart must keep abreast of one another. If either is neglected, even if it be only the intellect that is neglected, while the heart is kept active, his will yet be a mind in 'unstable equilibrium.' Arguments which he cannot rightly answer will fret him, or even shake his convictions, and his intellectual poverty will weaken the effect of his utterances. That was a most true saying of Dr. Arnold of Rugby, that he could not rightly minister to the young minds around him unless his own mind were like a lake which was constantly being refilled at one end while it was drawn from at the other. We should be students: we are unfortunate if we have not those intellectual interests and appetites which prompt us to be always using even spare minutes to satisfy them. We should carry on the studies we begin at college, not dropping any of them quite, and we should always keep up what we have

a positive bent for, not in Biblical literature only, but in our higher English literature, and in any direction, historical, scientific, or other, for which we have natural inclination and opportunity. Let us remember about reading, that the value of it to us does not depend upon its amount: but on the number of vivid and accurate impressions we retain from it. You may do then, what to my regret I have done too little myself, keep in commonplace books the notable passages which you would wish to remember and use. Some things we read are worth reading again and writing down and recurring to often. On subjects of special interest to us we should keep gathering year by year all relevant references and sayings by which, as we meet with them, we are struck. It is well that we should have a good library. Every one who loves books and uses them, needs to have them of his own. If we can at all help it, we must not starve our mind for want of books. We should be able in our study to keep the highest and best company. I am sorry to think of manses where a few books of the time when the minister was at college form practically his whole library, and mark his mental stagnation.

There is one gain I would still mention which we may certainly hope for from conscientious and prayerful study—we may have this mark on us of true education, that, while we know some things

well, we know our limits, and avoid the discredit which comes through going beyond them. Our study, if conscientious, may discipline us in intellectual honesty, which is even more important than intellectual power. I am old enough to recollect the controversy raised by a speech of Dr. Norman Macleod on the Sabbath. I had that interest in the question which comes of previous exercise of conscience in regard to it, and I read largely in what was printed at the time. Almost every prominent minister felt bound to publish something; but how few (as it seemed to me) showed that they had really grasped what they nevertheless undertook to speak about strongly! A signal example of the same defect is given in Dr. Stoughton's volume of *Recollections*, published a few years ago. Dr. Pusey and Lord Shaftesbury rivalled each other in the vehemence with which they condemned *Ecce Homo* soon after its appearance. Lord Shaftesbury said (I think) that it was the most injurious book that had for long been 'vomited forth from the jaws of hell.' Dr. Stoughton, meeting him soon after, began to indicate his opinion that a different view might be taken of the book. But it came out in the conversation that Lord Shaftesbury had not himself read it! Few people admire Lord Shaftesbury more than I do. I keep the veneration for him with which his *Life* inspired me when I read it. But this example of a fault of the English

Evangelical School of former days explains to us the terrible sarcasm which it provoked, that they reversed the apostolic precept, 'In malice be ye children, but in understanding be men'; and acted as if it read, 'In malice be men, in understanding be children.' Let this incident warn us of the duty of that intellectual honesty which study confirms—study especially that is prosecuted with devotion to God; and let us guard our lips against condemning or harshly judging where we imperfectly know.

Only one other feature of your private life would I touch on: What quality in a man will be most fruitful in the course of a lengthened out life?—will produce, I mean, most result? Shall we answer *energy* and *force*, with long hours of labour and little recreation? There is a quality which I admire more, which I believe will effect more, which I would therefore commend to you for cultivation—the quality in a man of prompt self-direction in the midst of his work, the power of full self-control in regard to what at any time he should apply himself to. Our profession is not one which is bound to hours as men working in offices are bound. With the interruptions of visits, funerals, and various meetings, we cannot even make sure, by our own choice, of regular days and hours of study, and nine out of ten ministers lose greatly from thus not having fixed hours of work. It will be a splendid gain for you—it will contribute

greatly to the turning of your life to full account—if you can acquire such self-mastery that you have a flexible and obedient mind and will, constantly and quickly obeying the suggestions of conscience as to the occupation to which at any hour you should give yourself, constantly recognising that the first place in life should be given to the first things, the times of freshest thought to the highest work ; and if you have, along with this, the business man's habit of not getting into arrear with letters and details. Seek, as a thing of great value, a wise ordering of time, the power of turning promptly to whatever work the occasion requires, and the self-mastery that does not dawdle, that does not lose over the newspaper the time for the sermon, that does not yield to that commonest form of idleness—work at the wrong thing, and that does not lose sleep through slavery to the book which we cannot lay down. This general advice I am giving has most point for those of you who shall be country ministers. In spite of himself a town minister has to acquire what I speak of. He lives under the discipline of high pressure, and he will testify, probably, that but for this he would never have known how much could be got out of him. Provide that discipline, let me say to you, from within yourselves, and it will not only quicken your work, it will secure you recreation, and maintain your health. Recreation is lost, and health suffers from

dawdling, deferring, hesitating, doing work in this way twice over, and from the consequent worry and self-reproach.

Passing now to a minister's social life, I need hardly say that his character in society greatly hinders or greatly helps, weakens or strengthens, all his work. It will immensely detract from his influence if he be of inferior tone and habit in society, or if he do not acquit himself well in his contact with public affairs. And there is this danger, that ordinary society being for him a time of unbending from very serious work, he is not unlikely to be seen at something less than his best in it. Many matters also of public business that he has to take part in are felt by him to be irksome interruptions, and he is apt to be hasty and impatient in them. As I look back on life, I regret to think of even eminent ministers, laborious in their study and most serious in their preaching, of whom the common public knew only the jest and the 'cackle' of their leisure times, or the quick temper of their share in meetings for business. The age is exacting in regard to the conduct of ministers: very ready to criticise and to judge. We cannot open a newspaper without seeing some trace of this. Newspaper managers may be supposed to know their public, and in the reports they give of presbyteries, or comments in their columns on the doings of ministers, they seem generally to

assume that their readers will be pleased or amused if they give prominence to inconsiderate or undignified words which ministers have spoken. I know nothing more penetrating and suggestive on our relation to society of the present day than these words of Dr. Marcus Dods:—‘This is perhaps the greatest difficulty we in our time have to solve, namely, how to live a really unworldly life in an age and society which will not suffer any marked external separation from the world, which hates, and very justly hates, all those old modes of separation by celibacy, monasticism, priestly separation from social intercourse. It is an age which says to its clergy, you must do all that we do and yet be quite different from us; you must move about in society, buy and sell, marry and bring up families just like the rest of us: but you must be throughout superior to the world, and to all the temptations these connections with the world bring. This age, I say, sets this task to its clergy, and then stands by and notes, not without triumph, how they fall short of it.’ There is much here for us to think of. But after all, is not this standard by which we are nowadays tested a just as well as a high one? What is it in few words but this: a demand for what has been called a ‘human unworldliness’ in us, a demand that we be men who have really overcome the world—are overcoming the world, I should rather say—yet are free from the show or the cant of aloofness from our fellows? And I am not

sure that any age was ever more certain than this one to appreciate and to be affected by the great virtues of self-sacrifice, quiet devotion to our work, and superiority to common motives. Just because the age is itself so penetrated by love of money, love of pleasure, and love of prominence, a disinterested life—a life which does not merely exchange one of the prizes of the world for another, but rises above them all,—such a life must have great power to win and to influence.

If this general account of our position and of our time be a true one, it will follow that in society we may be natural, unaffected, free from acting a part. We may join in recreations with less fear of being misunderstood than we might have done even a few years ago; with no fear, in fact, if we are really laborious and do not degenerate into idling and trifling. We do not require to force religious conversation in society; we shall indeed forbear to obtrude it, but speak of religion with frankness when it naturally occurs, or with a reverent reserve when any more would be out of place. This I think may also be said regarding our part in general conversation—about which it is so difficult to give rules: a minister should be a man in whose company conversation never can go down to its *lower* levels, and it will be a happy thing if people feel that when he is with them conversation rises to its higher levels—its higher, I mean, in real interest

and human kindness. Avoid being known as a teller of stories, or as engrossing the talk for some personal hobby; our own grievances or our own honours are subjects to be rarely and modestly touched upon. Recollect, besides, how common, even in companies which show no sign of it, are cases of spiritual crisis—people in the throes of temptation to sin, or to unbelief, who are watching our words and conduct to see if they may find in us, what our profession suggests, a friend from whom they may get help. In many a drawing-room there is some one who longs for some serious talk and for spiritual sympathy. To such a person it is a bitter disappointment if we seem only men of the world, undiscerning, irresponsive, and self-engrossed: while the same person will be grateful a whole lifetime after, if we use well an opening given us for a frankly believing word, whether serious or encouraging.

In public affairs we cannot well avoid having some share. To say nothing of Presbyteries and other Church Courts, we shall often be members, with laymen, of Boards, Committees, and the like. In regard to this region of things let me pass on to you a counsel given by the late Lord Coleridge to Church of England clergymen. He advised them to aim at *influence* rather than *power*. Think of this, and you will find there is much wisdom in it, especially in view of the natural ambitions of laymen, and the attitude of jealousy toward us

to which they are often prompted by public prints. A minister is sufficiently prominent already, they seem to feel, from the honour that belongs to his office and his privilege of the public ear on the Lord's day. They would therefore reserve other kinds of prominence to themselves, and they rightly expect it of us to be above entering into eager competition for posts which laymen covet. There is a great field open to us if, at business meetings, we make it our constant aim to advocate what is for righteousness, to be on the side of perfect fairness, to be of just judgment, and to be clear of all secret wire-pulling and conspiring. If we persevere in this we shall find ourselves more and more of influence, the consciences of others who work with us will be quickened, things which we urge on frankly righteous grounds will be done, and our contributions to discussions will be attentively received. But we shall mar all if we aim at power, if we insist too much on having the say or decision, if we struggle and press to be in the chair of School Board or Parish Council. Let our rule of life rather be to give place to other men in such things, to be careful to give to all their due consideration, and never to advance without consulting those who have a right to be consulted, a mistake from which many quarrels have arisen. Let us not even aim at ruling over our own kirk-session. In general you will have the more influence there, the less you insist on power.

There is a notable address to clergymen by Dean Church in his volume of Cathedral and University sermons on the subject of Temper. He takes the word in a very wide sense, as including our habit of mind and thought and feeling towards current opinions, classes of mankind and institutions. He means by it, he says, 'an entirely different thing from simply the presence or the bursting forth of indignation. To be in the presence of unquestionable injustice or baseness, and not to feel wrath burn at it, is not to be of the mind which the Bible reflects. And there cannot,' he says, 'be the seriousness and earnestness and zeal which are essential to all human character, without a man chafing and being provoked, when he finds stupidity, or selfishness, or laziness, or insincerity in his way. Nor am I speaking,' he goes on, 'of that energy, that determination, that fire of hostility, which may animate a great spirit against a great abuse.' . . . 'I am speaking of what we all understand when we speak of a man *showing temper*; or having that weakness or defect in his way of dealing with matters, which we know by the name of temper, whether irritable, or querulous, or acrimonious, or despondent, or gloomy.' I am obliged to admit that temper is a special temptation to us ministers. It is due perhaps to the descent we feel in worldly affairs from the ideal grandeur and beauty of the truths which we live amongst and deal with in our thought and preaching. Anyhow, let us watch against temper.

Beware of that contentious manner in pressing our views which some of us fall into in the mere effort to state them in debate. Be slow to speak, and cultivate when you must speak a strong, quiet, persuasive presentation of your views. Have a large charity in intercourse with men, believing that often there are reasons for their opposition to us beyond what we know of, beyond the poor reasons, as we think them, which perhaps are all they urge expressly. It may be that their opposition begins from some fault of ours in another matter of which we are unaware. Bear a great deal rather than have a squabble with heritors, managers, or elders, or a newspaper squabble, any one of which leaves a bad savour in the public memory for a long time. Beware of the tendency to feel ourselves hardly used, to pity ourselves, or to magnify a grievance, and in general you may assume that if there is what seems a general set against you in your session or among your people, you are yourself in the fault originally, however clearly you may make yourself out to be right in the logic of the special dispute.

I have observed more than once with sympathy and with pain a young man, known in beginning life as 'a good fellow,' or a 'nice fellow,' who meets with some wrong—perhaps real, perhaps unreal—from managers or heritors, and it seems to get inside his brain and fix itself there. He gets more and more to see it out of proportion and from only one point of view. He thinks and prints about it ;

perhaps if he had not printed, the thing might have been forgotten—but that thing ruins his career. He is thrown off his balance by it and never seems to recover. He acquires a name for being impracticable, for not knowing how to bear and forbear as life requires. His case comes up perhaps again and again in church courts, and he is accounted a failure. Believe me, it is a thing to pray for that you be kept from ruinous error of temper, and to thank God for, with special gratitude and humbleness of mind, when you have been carried safely in this respect through the earlier stages of life.

Let me in closing recall the word of St. Paul which sustained what I said to you in my earlier addresses: 'Make full proof of thy ministry.' Let your ministry be one which in aim, in self-consecration, and in the divine powers in the use of which you carry it on, shall be of the highest kind. Let none of those powers by which the great ministries have been furnished be left unused by you. You are entering a profession which in the matter of worldly profit will not, as a general rule, bring you such reward as you would obtain in some other walks of life. See to it the more that you have its highest satisfactions. And let me say that there is a present urgency in regard to the most serious counsels I have given you for these two reasons of which I would have you to be thoroughly aware. First, because you will greatly decide the character of your whole ministry by the manner in which you

begin it. Your first start will, in respect of aim, method, and habit of life, long have a hold on you. Phillips Brooks said, 'I am a slave to this day to my first years in the ministry and to what I did then.' Second, because there is a greatness in your first opportunities of which you may not be aware, which I am glad to fore-announce to you and prepare you for. It arises in this way. A congregation, of whatever character and of whatever class it is composed, has a special openness of ear and heart to the combination in the man who addresses it of devoutness and youth. Whether it is because of springs of hope which this touches in men, or partly perhaps because of an affectionate interest which it evokes, there is hardly any voice for God that more readily moves and inspires than that of a young man who is felt while he speaks to be at the beginning of a devoted life. It is a solemn thing in any view that you have *but one youth* to give to the service of Christ. Make sure that you do give it to Him, and your present prospect is the fuller of responsibility and of hope from the undoubted fact which I tell you of beforehand, of the special access you may have to human hearts in the years that are immediately before you. And if you are even met by great difficulties, outward or inward, have the faith, which is surely congenial to youth, that with God's help and grace none of them are insuperable. It may be that when you are settled in a parish you will be told in regard to some class of

people that they cannot be reached by a minister. You may hear this said perhaps of the young men of the district. Do not believe it. Never doubt that there is something of Christ, something of the light that lighteth every man, and of a mind that responds to the best good, in men or women of every class. Resolve that, whatever it may cost, you are not to be paralysed by difficulties; that if one way will not do, another must be tried, till the right way is found; and that you will not endure to live out a fruitless ministry, a ministry like that described by St. Paul as possible even for a saved man, a ministry which has been a life-long building into the temple of God of mere wood, hay, or stubble; and in the day when each man's work shall be made manifest, when the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is, this builder escapes indeed, but so as through fire, with nothing of all his work that has stood the test of judgment, nothing that abides, nothing for which he shall receive reward.

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